



A DAY AT THE ACROPOLIS

MINISTRY OF CULTURE - FIRST EPHORATE OF PREHISTORIC AND CLASSICAL ANTIQUITIES
COMMITTEE FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE ACROPOLIS MONUMENTS - EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES

ANCIENT GREEK MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Ancient Greeks considered music to be an essential element of every intellectual, artistic and social activity as well as of everyday life. They believed that it forms man's character and thus it is an ideal medium for bringing up the young. The musical instruments of ancient Greeks consisted of strings, wind and percussion. The most significant instruments are:

STRINGS

These instruments had strings which were usually equal in length and unequal in width. They were either played directly with the fingers or with a plectrum.

Lyre: The most common of the musical instruments, the lyre, was taught in school and usually played by amateurs. It was associated with the worship of Apollo and the tradition was that it was invented by Hermes. The sound-box is made of the shell of a tortoise. A cow-hide was stretched over the hollow side to create vibrations. On the side two horns of a wild goat were extended upwards, onto which a cross-bar was attached. The lyre usually had 7 strings made from animal intestines, tendons, flax, etc.

Barbiton: A deviation of the lyre, narrower and longer. The number of its strings is unknown.

Kithara: A much larger instrument, more perfected and elaborate than the lyre. It differed in terms of its sound-box (which was wooden), its size and sound. It had a varied number of strings and was only played by professionals.

Gradle kithara: This instrument had a large sound-box with vertical arms and 7 strings. In most illustrations it is held by the Muses.

Harp: This instrument had a sound-box that was vertical on a base or in the shape of an upright angle. It had many different length strings which extended from the base. There were many variations. The harp was usually played by women, often by the Muses.

WIND

The wind instruments were divided into two categories; Wind instruments with a mouth-piece (reed) and wind instruments in which the sound was derived by blowing directly without a mouth-piece.

Aulos: Instrument with reed. It was made of bamboo, bone, bronze, etc. and had varied length. It originally had 3 or 4 fingerholes and later as many as 15. Usually two auloi with pipes of equal or different lengths were used simultaneously.

Pan's Syrinx: Instrument without a reed that consisted of one or numerous pipes. The latter usually consisted of 7 pipes of equal or different lengths bound together by wax and by 1 or 2 cross-bars. When the pipes were the same length, they were filled with wax at various heights thus creating a different range of notes.

Salpinx: This instrument was either a long slender trumpet usually of bronze or a curved horn (keras). It was mostly used as a military and ceremonial heralding device.

PERCUSSION

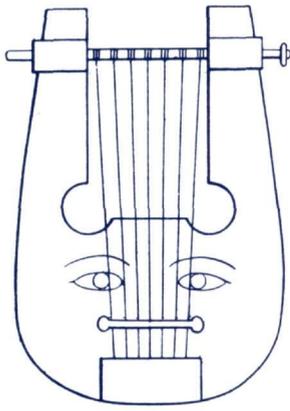
These instruments created sound through percussion and were often associated with the orgiastic cults of Cybele and Dionysos.

Krotala: Instruments made from two hollow pieces of shell, wood or metal. Krotala were usually used by women as castanets.

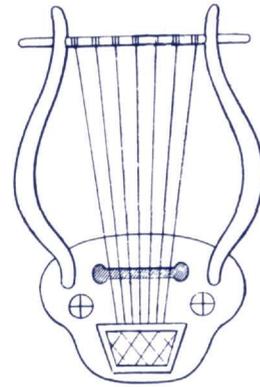
Cymbals: Instruments consisting of two hollow hemispherical metal plates in the shape of the contemporary ones (piati).

Tympanon (Drums): Instrument made of a wooden cylinder with leather stretched over both sides: they were usually played by women, by hand.

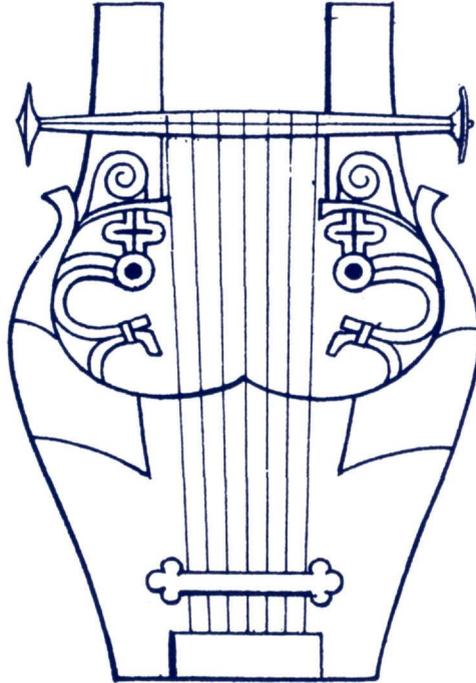
STRINGS



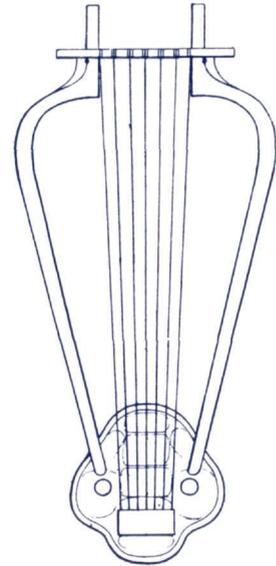
CRADLE KITHARA



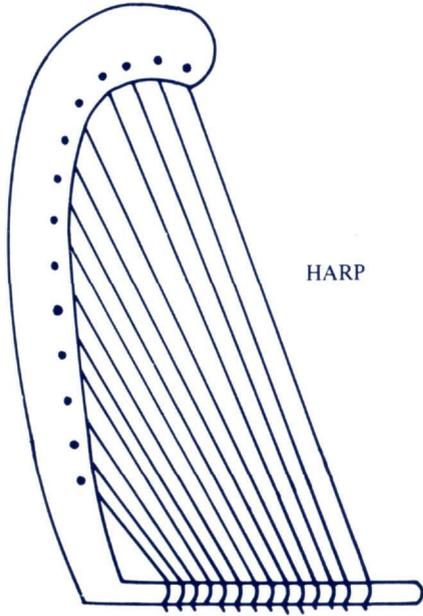
LYRE



KITHARA



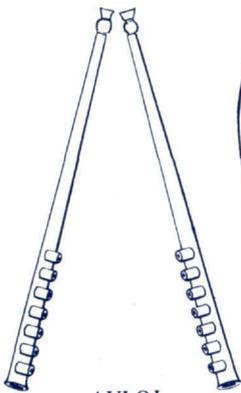
BARBITON



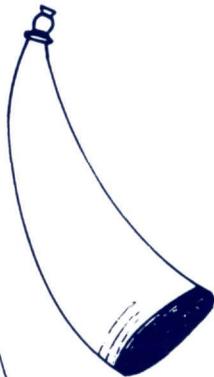
HARP

WIND

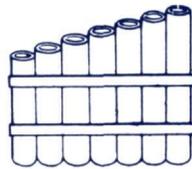
PERCUSSION



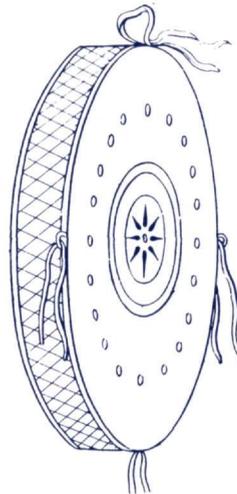
AULOI



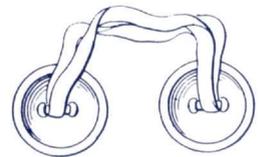
HORN



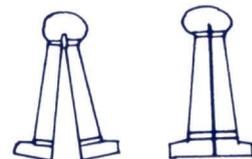
PAN'S SIRINX



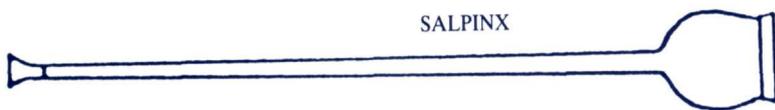
DRUMS



CYMBALS



KROTALA



SALPINX