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## The Wealth of Instruments

### The Egyptian Instruments

The archeological and traditional Egyptian history of music is much more abundant than in any other country. The wall reliefs of the Ancient Egyptian temples and tombs depict numerous types and forms of musical instruments, the technique in which these instruments were to be played and tuned, the ensemble playing, and much, much more.

These musical scenes visibly show the hands of the harp player striking certain strings, and the wind instrument players playing certain chords.

The distances of the lute frets clearly show that the corresponding intervals and scales can be measured and calculated. The positions of the harpists' hands on the strings clearly indicate ratios such as the Fourth, the Fifth, and the Octave—revealing an unquestionable knowledge of the laws governing musical harmony. The playing of musical instruments is controlled by the conductors' hand movements, which also help us identify certain tones, intervals and functions of sound.

In addition to the numerous representations of musical scenes pictured in temples and tombs from all periods throughout Egypt's dynastic history, we also have access to hundreds of various Ancient Egyptian musical instruments that have been recovered from their tombs. These Egyptian instruments are now spread in museums and private collections throughout the world. Most of these instruments were found to be carefully and individually wrapped in cloth, before they were buried.

All these findings, together with the early historian writings of Egyptian musical heritage, as well as the traditions of modern Nile inhabitants, corroborate to provide the most authentic case of the musical history of Ancient Egypt.

Unfortunately, much of this CLEARLY EGYPTIAN evidence has been distorted, time and time again throughout history, by Western academia. [More about the historical distortion by Western academia can be found in the Appendices of this book.]

## General Characteristics of Egyptian Instruments

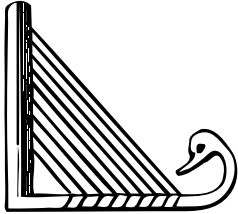
1. Some tombs yielded actual instruments that were never depicted in reliefs of temples or tombs, such as cylindrical bass drums. Only the Egyptian instruments that were related to the function of the operation of temples and tombs were depicted in the reliefs. Many other instruments that were not a part of these religious activities in temples and tombs were not represented.
2. It should also be emphasized that most Ancient Egyptian tombs were robbed, mostly by foreign invaders,

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and only a few instruments were left behind. It is these “few” (even though a very large quantity compared to any other country) that we have some records of. Accordingly, one should not conclude that because certain instruments were not found in the survived temples and tombs (of which most were destroyed) that they didn’t exist in Ancient Egypt.

3. The depicted musical scenes in Ancient Egyptian tombs, as well as instruments found from the Old and Middle Kingdoms, indicate ratios between the open strings of the harp, the densely ordered frets on the long necks of string instruments, as well as the measurements between the fingerholes in wind instruments that reveal/confirm:
  - a. Several types of musical scales that are based on the unique Egyptian musical comma and its triple parts of buk-nunu.
  - b. Narrow-stepped scales were common from the earliest known Egyptian history (more than 5,000 years ago).
  - c. Playing and tuning techniques of string instruments to provide solo and chordal playing of instruments.
  - d. Playing techniques of wind instruments that provide small increments and organ effect.
  - e. The use of both the cyclic (up-and-down) method, and the divisive method. [See chapters 9 and 14.]
  
4. The Ancient Egyptians were/are famed worldwide for their mastery of the playing techniques of their musical instruments. The skill of the Egyptians, in the use of these instruments, was affirmed by Athenaeus, who stated (in his texts [iv, 25]) that both the Greeks and “barbarians” were taught music by Egyptian natives. After the demise of the Ancient Egyptian Pharaonic

Era, Egypt continued to be the learning center for music, for the Arabized/Islamized countries.

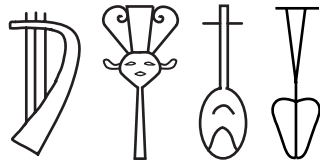
5. The “decorative” elements of the Ancient Egyptian string instruments have vital significance. The ends of these instruments are “decorated” with the heads of *neteru* (gods/goddesses), animals, humans and birds. The swan is found prominently in many instruments. The swan was regarded by the Ancient Egyptians as a bird sacred in two capacities: 1) as being like the crow and raven, gifted with the spirit of prediction; and 2) for his extraordinary vocal powers. The sweetness of his song, especially at the approach of death, was not only extolled by all the poets of antiquity, but by historians, philosophers, and sages.
 
  
6. Ma-at is found prominently in numerous instruments to represent her function as *balanced equilibrium*. Her name was mistaken to be the name of several instruments, by Western academicians. Names of instruments given by Western academia are arbitrary. Ancient Egyptians did not use abstract names, they used descriptive adjectives for everything to describe their functions. It is therefore very common to find several terms (“names”) for a person, an instrument, or anything. [More about naming and names in Ancient Egypt in *Egyptian Cosmology: The Animated Universe*, by same author.]
  
7. The cosmic conscious Egyptians changed emphasis in EVERYTHING in their life in order to attune to the changes in the zodiac ages. The utilization of some

instruments more than others in different eras was a direct response to cosmic changes and nothing else. [See *Egyptian Cosmology: The Animated Universe*, by same author, for these Egyptian practices.]

It is absurd to arbitrarily assume that the prominence of an instrument in a certain era is due to Egyptian importation, especially when there is no evidence that such an instrument ever existed in the alleged region.

All early Greek and Roman writers reported that Egyptians never adopted others' ways. [Refer to chapter 22, *The Beat Goes On*.]

7. The presence of hieroglyphs in the shape of musical instruments (much older than 5,000 years) attest to their Egyptian origin.



## The Musical Orchestra

Musical instruments differ in compass, variety of strength of a single note, accent value, survival value, speed of articulation for a repeated note and how many notes each instrument can play at once. As such, a variety of instruments were utilized by the Ancient Egyptians, to provide a complete system/range of musical sounds.

It should be noted that the overview of Ancient Egyptian musical instruments in this book is limited to instruments that can be compared with present-day instruments.