

Othonas Mpikakis

# **Introduction to Cretan Lyra**

**for beginners**



Othonas Bikakis' introductory book for learning the Cretan lyra will surely serve as a valuable resource not only for future students of this instrument, but for teachers as well.

A remarkable lyra player himself, Othonas organizes his material methodically and intelligibly, guiding students through the twists and turns of the rugged terrain of the Cretan lyra, a very demanding instrument technically with a highly idiomatic character and one of the largest repertoires in Greek traditional music.

His use of the stave as a teaching tool, and as a method of transcribing the pieces, is another very positive aspect of this book that facilitates easier accessibility for the students to other repertoires should that interest them.

**Ross Daly**

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# AUDIO GUIDE

**Listen and download the book's exercises and musical pieces.**

Access all audio sections of this book for free via the link below or by scanning the QR code with your phone.

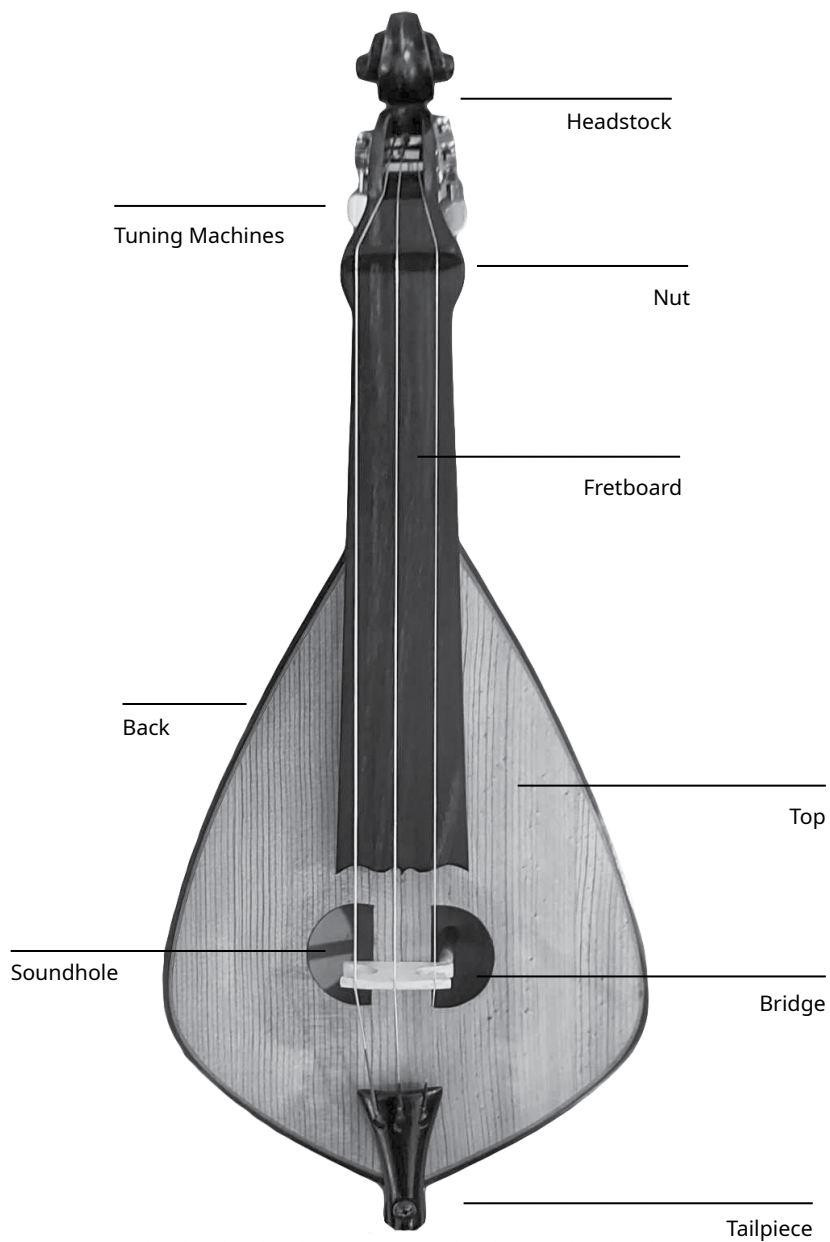


► [soundcloud.com/fagottobooks/sets/krhtikh-lyra-1](https://soundcloud.com/fagottobooks/sets/krhtikh-lyra-1)

# CRETAN LYRA

**Tuning:** G3 - D4 - A4

**Bow:** In order to play the Cretan Lyra we use a violin bow, either modern or baroque type.



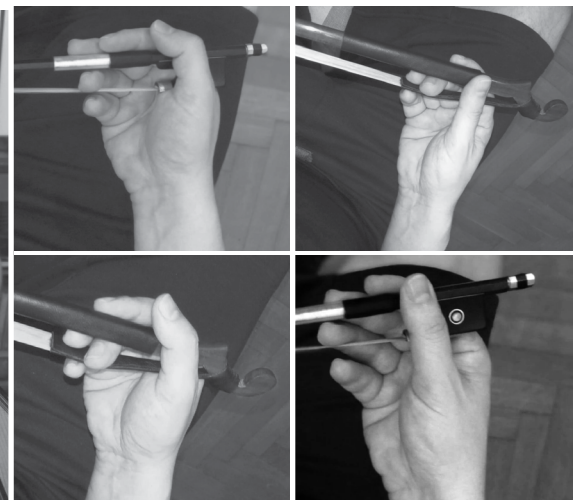
## 1. Holding Stances



## 2. Fretboard Stance



## 3. Bow Stances



## The Cretan Lyra – notes, values, rests

### Part I – Exercises

How to read the exercises

We've taken the following straightforward approach: students begin with open string bow exercises followed by a short series of easy tetrachord exercises.

Next they tackle a few basic scales from Byzantine Music (modes) and the Modal Music of the East Mediterranean as well as scales from Western European music (major).

Finally, they practice arpège, rests, small musical phrases, scales and, lastly, position changes.

All exercises include bow notation (down bow, up bow) to help students, with the guidance of their teachers, gain a fundamental understanding of bow technique.

Exercises are listed in order of increasing difficulty, but instructors may change their sequence or adapt them according to student capability.

Those acquainted with the system of Byzantine music, or the music of the Eastern Mediterranean in general, may, if they wish, execute the exercises with non-tempered intervals, without heeding the noted key signature or accidentals.

For the sake of clarity and brevity, I use "modal formations" throughout to denote the system of musical modes.

This rudimentary induction will equip students, under the guidance of their teachers, with the rhythmic, musical and melodic skills they need to access the musical texts.

## The Cretan Lyra – notes, values, rests

### TETRACHORDS

- The following exercises 1, 2, and 3 shall be executed according to the above examples.
- The numbers next to the notes designate the finger position for each string.
- Combining the tetrachords from Exercise 1 and Exercise 2

### **Modal formations 1**

- Scale exercise example
- The dominant notes of each scale are marked in color.
- Curved lines designate tone intervals and straight lines designate semi-tone intervals.
- Notes corresponding to the 6th degree of the scale are marked by arrows indicating that, in descending movements, they are lowered by a semitone.

### **Modal formations 2**

- Scale exercise example
- The dominant notes of each scale are marked in color.
- Curved lines designate tone intervals and straight lines designate semi-tone intervals.

### **Basic major scales**

- Scale exercise example
- The dominant notes of each scale are marked in color.
- Curved lines designate tone intervals and straight lines designate semi-tone intervals.

### **Arpège exercises**

### **Quarter rest exercises**

### **Tetrachord modal phrases / modes**

### Pentachord modal phrases / Modes

### Eighth rest exercises

#### Exercises with scales

- All exercises that follow can be executed in any scale.
- Exercises 1 – 5 may be played interchangeably according to their corresponding examples.

#### Exercises with position variations in F Major

- The F Major scale at this level is a bit tricky because, to play the eighth note (F), we need to change the position of our hand (position change).
- There are a variety of possible position changes that can be executed in a sort of inaudible glissando.
- Positions are designated within the circles.
- **Group A** In exercises 1 and 2, we ascend and descend with the same finger and in the same way.
- **Group B** In exercise 3 we ascend and descend with different fingers and in exercises 4 and 5 we ascend and descend with the same fingers and in the same way.
- **Group C** The arrangement that follows allows us to play two more notes. We ascend and descend with the same fingers and in the same way.

## **PART 2 | Scores**

The musical works are ordered according to melodic complexity. But teachers may choose, here as well, to reorder the sequence and adapt the pieces to the individual skill level and progress of their students. Those who know, can and wish to teach the pieces in non-tempered intervals/scales, without taking into account the noted key signature or accidentals, may again do so.

None of the musical scores are marked with the appropriate tempo as this would hinder, rather than facilitate, learning for beginner level students.

The stave key signature is not used in the usual way, but rather follows the “musical mode” according to which the melody develops in the fundamental tetrachord or tetrachords. This is one instance of musical notation where the “modal melodies” are not characterized by major or minor keys signatures.

In Cretan music, players are free to execute the melodies as they choose. Each time they play, their spontaneous and improvised bow movements create a multitude of stylistic variations from a single musical text. Bow position (down bow, up bow) is not noted in the following scores so that teachers and students may decide which bow positions are best suited to the style they are practicing.

Songs with lyrics and two distinct musical phrases are marked with the capital letters A and B while variations of these phrases are noted as A1, A2, B1, B2 etc. If the musical phrases are identical but differ in pitch, the corresponding lower case letters a, b, .. etc. are used. In instrumental pieces that feature more than one musical phrase, these are designated as 1st, 2nd, 3rd (musical phrase). In cases where a melody or musical phrase begins in the middle of a measures, this is noted with a dotted bar line.

The stave brackets used in this book indicate that the melody can be repeated more than once. Teachers should determine the number of repetitions for their students, which may be 3, 4, 5 etc. Wherever it's necessary to repeat the melody more than once to fulfil the time signature, the number of repetitions is noted, for instance, as x4.

All the scores include a Coda in order to create a finale for the musical piece. In this book, it is designated as “To Coda al Fine” and appears in the measure after which we must execute the Coda.

The chords appropriate for accompanying each melody are noted with Latin letters and an asterisk (\*). These chords are not characterized as major or minor and include only their tonic and root which may be either the 5th or 4th scale degree. In some cases, the tonic itself, a kind of drone, suffices for the accompanying harmony. The unique musical style of Cretan music and, in a certain sense, its “modality” are thus reinforced. To comprehend this style, one should, musically speaking, avoid accompaniment according to the principles of Western harmony that require chords to contain at least the 3rd degree.

## Music Scores 1 - 8

### Revision | Part 1

*Wanting to learn is the first step to true knowledge (Isokrates)*

It's time for students to revisit the exercises proposed below. It is important to try and memorise most of the exercises, especially those marked with bold style.

Also in Part 1 / Exercises is important to focus on the correct bow movement. Teachers and students can of course choose their order of preference according to their progress.

### Part 1 / Exercises

1. Bow Exercises with "open" strings
2. Modal formations 1
3. Modal formations 2
4. Basic major scales
5. Arpège exercises
6. Quarter rest exercises
7. Eighth rest exercises
8. Exercises with position changes in F major

(again, teachers and students may choose which of the six exercises are better suited to their level)

### Part 2 / Scores

Listed are the final notes of each piece (usually taking part A as their base), to help students memorize the music and play it by heart.

## Music Scores 9 - 15

## **Revision | Part 2**

*Repetition is the mother of all learning (Ancient Greek saying)*

Here students have completed the course material of the first year and should repeat the steps suggested below. It's best if students can play all the exercises in bold letters from memory (by heart) for this second phase or that they attempt to learn the repertoire, at the very least.

Don't forget that in "Part 1/Exercises" special emphasis should be given to bow manipulation and the rest exercises. As in the previous sections, teachers here as well should advise students on the most effective ways to practice and the best repetition sequences to use, according to their skill level and progress.

### **Part 1 / Exercises**

1. Modal formations 1
2. Modal formations 2
3. Basic major scales
4. Quarter rest exercises
5. Eighth rest exercises
6. Exercises with position variations in F Major

(again, teachers and students may choose which of the six exercises are better suited to their level)

### **Part 2 / Scores**

Listed are the final notes of each piece (usually taking part A as their base), to help students memorize the music and play it by heart.