

# LYRE OF UR NEWS

ISSUE number 5 June 2009

## The Lyre visits the USA

### WASHINGTON DC



Danny George, Mrs & Dr Al Khalili, Andy Lowings, Jennifer Sturdy

**O**n 11 March 2009 Andy Lowings and Jennifer Sturdy set off from London Heathrow to Washington DC with the Gold Lyre of Ur. United Airlines were extremely interested and helpful: halfway across the Atlantic there was a message from the pilot, *“we have your important cargo safely stowed!”* An article about us has appeared in the United Airlines in-house magazine and will be read by 15,000 employees. And so it continued, with support and help from friends in Clifton, Virginia, and the

sponsorship of Dr Hadi Al Khalili, the Iraqi Cultural Attaché.

There were two performances at the Rasmusson Theatre, in the American Indian Museum of the Smithsonian Institution.

This is a very modern, state-of-the-art performance venue, with excellent sound and lighting facilities. It seats around 330 people, and on Saturday 14 March there was a full house.



Lyre packed ready for trip to USA

The audience was mainly delegates from an Iraqi-American conference: they knew all about the Gold Lyre of Ur, and clustered round excitedly at the end to have their photographs taken with it and to ask many questions about the making of it and the performance. This had consisted of a brief introduction about the project, given by Andy, then performances by Jennifer of translated Sumerian poetry, a translated dialogue between Andy and Jennifer, and a reading of a poem in Arabic.

The latter was read by a lady, well-known in Iraq as a newsreader on Iraqi television.



United Airline Staff at Heathrow

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One of the very significant members of the audience who introduced himself at the end was Professor Donny George, formerly director of the Museum of Baghdad. He was very positive about the entire project, which he has apparently followed keenly since its inception. We too have followed his activities in working towards the restoration of the antiquities of Iraq, so it was an exciting moment to meet face-to-face.



Rasmuson Theatre stage, Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC

On Sunday 15 March there was a second concert at the Rasmuson Theatre, with an invited audience from the Iraqi community in Washington DC and the immediate vicinity. Once again, there was an enthusiastic reception. Andy and Jennifer were also interviewed for Iraqi TV. Thanks must go to Dr Al Khalili and his team for making these events possible. We would very much like to return to the USA in the future.

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## Talk at the Library of Congress Washington DC

**W**hilst in America we were contacted to tell the story of the Royal Lyres of Ur at the Library of Congress itself.

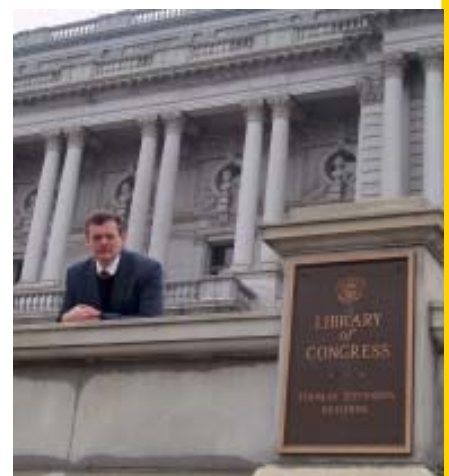
**Public Events at the Library of Congress**  
**Tuesday, March 17, 2009**  
**12:00 PM - 1:00 PM Lecture — Lyre of UR Project**  
 African/Middle Eastern Reading Room, Second floor Thomas Jefferson building.  
 Art historian Andy Lowings presents a talk titled "Lyre of UR Project"

It was St Patrick's day at noon when we climbed the steps opposite the US Congress building itself and it was fantastic to see our project up on the announcement board at the entrance.



Andy at the Library of Congress

Andy Lowings spoke about the Lyre Project which was introduced as "something out of the ordinary and very special indeed". The holiday let many ordinary people come to make a visit to this beautiful building.



Andy outside the Library of Congress

The talk was filmed and recorded and is available on the internet at:  
[http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature\\_wdesc.php?rec=4548](http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=4548)

## Vermont University talk to the students

**F**ollowing on from an invitation from Assistant Professor of Classics John Franklin of Vermont University, Andy flew up to Burlington in Vermont and talked to a packed-out lecture theatre on the subject of the Lyre.

Unfortunately the aircraft was too small to take the Lyre inside and it had to be left at Ronald Reagan Airport. But the event was a success and the gold bull's head was much admired by staff and students.

To finish off the talk, the love poem "What lies can I offer to my mother?" was performed live by two brave students pulled out of the audience. The well-educated students there are hugely interested in the classical worlds of Greece and Rome and we hope to plan some event as a collaborative venture with Vermont University.



Andy in Vermont -10°C

Thank you again to John Franklin and his wife for looking after Andy and for making this fine event work so perfectly.

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## Luo Lyre-players of Kenya come to England !

**K**enge Kenge the Luo rockers who we met when we travelled to Kenya were invited to play in England for WOMAD (World of Music and Dance) last summer.

We took the chance to invite them to visit us in Peterborough.

Here their Nyatiti player Gabriel appears for their new video shot at Crowland Abbey.

All of twelve players strong, they performed for us twice in Peterborough and ate us out of house and home! As usual it was a delight to see their reaction to ordinary things here.

Yet their music raised the roof of the church when they took part in the Sunday service next door!



Jennifer Sturdy with Gabriel Odour from Kenya

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## New composition for the Lyre

**W**e would like to acknowledge the support of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq who awarded us a sum of money to create a new work for Lyre and Horns.

Marcus Tristan Heathcock, a composer from St Petersburg, came to visit us several times and we remain keen to perform this work in the near future.



BISI



# Inanna Day

**T**he Gold Lyre of Ur Project was at the British Museum as part of “INANNA DAY” in May 2007.

Dr. Dominique Collon, a curator in the British Museum’s Department of the Ancient Near East, spoke on the geography, history, art, religion, and culture of Sumer, with glimpses of Inanna’s later development as Ishtar.

Dr. Irving Finkel (the Assistant Keeper in the Museum’s Department of the Ancient Near East) spoke on the adventure and mystery of the discovering of the cuneiform texts and the importance of the Goddess Inanna in the texts.

Archaeomusicologist Richard Dumbrill gave a short demonstration on replicas of the Lyre of Ur and a lute from Uruk and spoke informally about the music’s relationship to godship in Sumer and to Inanna.



Jennifer Sturdy, Andy & Maeve Lowings in the British Museum

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## Liverpool Anglican Cathedral

***The Gold Lyre of Ur performs in Liverpool! March 2008.***

**T**he annual dinner of the Classical Association took place in the Liverpool Cathedral’s magnificent nave. Andy and Jennifer played music and stalked the seated diners reciting Sumerian proverbs, made into a short dramatic scene.

Ending in a mock argument and trading of insults in the earthy style of Mesopotamia, the ten-minute work was played to 300 people and to the London Times newspaper Classics critic, Philip Howard!

The following week he declared in print

*“The actors stalked the dinner reciting proverbs. Delightfully eccentric!”*

The following day we gave a talk in the Cathedral to crowds of on-looking public. We had been given a great boost by the Liverpool Echo newspaper and extra rows of seats had to be placed (twice) before it got going.



Andy & Jennifer in Liverpool Cathedral

*“I took two buses to come here and wouldn't miss this for anything!” one lady told us.*

Liverpool Cathedral is modern and huge inside. It is widely used for all sorts of activities by the people there. These were just two of the kinds of events taking place inside.

Thanks to the UK Classical Association for inviting us and to the Cathedral for asking us to perform again the next day.

## British Museum hosts conference on Music in Sumer!

**T**he *Conference on Music of Sumer and After* took place in the British Museum in December 2008 and attracted a number of well-known academics who presented their papers on subjects sometimes only tenuously connected to this theme.

Andy Lowings presented a paper on the making of the Gold Lyre of Ur in the lecture theatre of the museum.



Bill Taylor showing the Lyre

Later that night Bill Taylor and Jennifer Sturdy were part of our Evening of Mesopotamian music at the Bolivar Hall held to coincide with the conference.

130 people came along, including many researchers into obscure archaeological music.

Susanna Rühling and Jutta played Roman pipes and drums. Dr. Stefan Hagel played pipes from Greece and performed some lyre music to widen the evening's interest.



Bolivar Hall, London

Thanks to those contributors of the evening. Especially to Helen Natrass who kindly promoted the event, and to the Venezuelan Embassy for making available the Bolivar Hall.



## Canterbury Old Synagogue.

**T**he King's School, Canterbury, provided a venue for the Gold Lyre at their concert hall, the Old Synagogue, in December 2008.

Using our new lighting-system, with the backdrop of Egyptian-style architecture of the hall we tried out a "question and answer session" to help put into context the history and story of the early times of Mesopotamia, and the Royal Graves at Ur.

Thank you to Canterbury school and especially to Helen Natrass who organised the event for us. Helen is a geotechnical geologist who consulted to the Channel Tunnel project and to other major civil engineering projects. She is a talented musician besides, playing a number of instruments.



Andy, Jennifer, Bill Taylor and Dr Helen Natrass and the Lyre

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## Musical Instrument Museum, Brussels

**T**he Musical Instrument Museum in Brussels is a world-class museum of its kind, and has a small performance area where regular concerts are staged.

In March 2008 Bill Taylor and Jennifer Sturdy gave an hour-long concert of Sumerian poetry and lyre music, which was well-received by the interested audience who at the end, clustered round to ask questions about the lyre and its history. They were also interested in the costumes worn by Bill and Jennifer on this occasion, not to mention Queen Pu-Abi's wig and jewellery!

Many thanks to Wim Verhulst, the events organiser from the museum, who arranged this concert.



Musical Instrument Museum

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## Royal Museum of Art and History, Brussels: March 2008

**T**his museum staged an exhibition called "Gilgamesh", which proved to be enormously popular. In conjunction with the exhibition, Professor Eric Gubel invited Andy Lowings to give an illustrated lecture on the Gold Lyre of Ur in the museum lecture theatre. The lecture was well-attended and provoked many questions from the audience, all fascinated by hearing how a playable replica had been made. They, of course, wanted to hear what it sounded like but the answer to that is, please invite us back to give a performance! They were intrigued by hearing a few notes, in any case.

The exhibition used a recording of Bill Taylor playing the lyre and Barnaby Brown playing the silver pipes of Ur as part of the background information about Sumerian life.

# Musical Archaeology Symposium Berlin

**T**he International Study Group for Musical Archaeology in Berlin invited us to present a paper and to give a concert in the Ethnological Museum of Berlin in September 2008.

It was our third visit. We drove over from UK, collecting Bill Taylor who was in Belgium at the time, and were put up in great style by our German hosts.

Diana Conti (our ballet dancer) and Jon Letcher (our instrument maker) flew to Berlin and joined us to take part in the events.



Jennifer Sturdy, Bill Taylor, Diana Conti & Andy Lowings

Andy Lowings talked on Lyres in the East African world, played sounds and music, and conjectured on the connections between them all. Some of the papers were very interesting and ethno-music archaeology clearly is becoming a growing and popular field to enter.



Graeme Lawson & Jon Letcher

The museum evening event was equally interesting and Bill, Jennifer and Diana Conti played in the atmospheric surroundings of the museum in Berlin.

The University of Helwan representatives were also there and they performed with Pharaonic drums, alongside pre-Hispanic flutes and drums before the audience were invited to take part in the music making. For almost half an hour of ad-hoc jamming!

Many thanks to ISGMA organisers, Ricardo Eichmann and Adje Both for inviting us and making us so welcome.

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## CITY WEEPS / BAGHDAD MONOLOGUE

**T**his new piece of music written by Andrew Lovett was premièred on 19 May 2009 at the Junction Theatre, Cambridge. It features sounds of the lyre, reproduced electronically, to create a modern work.

Andy Lowings attended the premiere and was warmly welcomed by the composer and members of the audience.



Andrew Lovett & Andy Lowings

**We would be delighted to receive offers of support and invitations to perform.**

Please get in touch with us at:

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## “The Legacy of an Ancient Civilisation in Africa.”

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Winston Churchill Memorial Trust expedition by Andy Lowings.

**T**his fantastic opportunity to delve more into the subject of Lyres and their modern counterparts in Africa today was afforded to Andy in 2007. Supported by a fund he visited Ethiopia, Jordan, Egypt and Kenya looking for lyre players, and finding them in all sorts of corners of the world.

“I discovered Lyre playing beduin in Sinai, the simsimiyyah-playing fishermen of Jordan were there too. Then also in Ethiopia I took lessons with the hugely respected Alemu Aga in Addis Ababa. Then down in Kenya met up with the tribes who play similar instruments today around Lake Victoria.”

Andy has talked about the trip in Berlin and of course remains in contact with all the players through the internet. The connection to the first lyres in Mesopotamia is obvious he says but hard evidence is always needed for the academics so for the time being it is only so much speculation about how they came to be played in these countries.

It was completed by an awards ceremony in the Guildhall London with Lady Churchill present.



The Award Ceremony

Andy is shown here with two other Fellows, one who climbed Everest and one who travelled across Africa by land, although blind.

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### The Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem

**I**n January 2008, Keith Jobling visited the Bible Lands Museum, Jerusalem, to attend the opening of their special exhibition “**Sounds of Ancient Music**”.



Joan Westenholz & Prof. Anne Kilmer

He had the opportunity to present a fully illustrated talk about the Gold Lyre of Ur.

There was a significant amount of interest in the instrument which, in many people’s eyes, is synonymous with the Biblical Harp of David.



Keith Jobling

On this occasion Keith was also privileged to meet Professor Anne Kilmer, the world-renowned American ethno-music-archaeologist, who has taken such a keen interest in our project from the outset. She was delighted to hear how the Project has progressed.

Many thanks to Joan Westenholz from the Bible Lands Museum for her kind invitation.



## Leeds University

**I**n April 2008 Andy Lowings and Jennifer Sturdy were invited to attend the closing day of a conference held by the Leeds University Department of Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies.



Cover of the Conference Booklet



With the Organisers

poetry. Many of course were familiar with the story of this iconic instrument from the Middle East, and were delighted to see that a playable replica had been made, and to hear what it sounded like.

After the performance, many stayed to discuss the making of the lyre, and to enquire about the history of the project.

Many thanks to Leeds University for their kind invitation, and their interest in what we do.

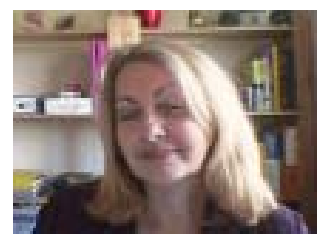
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## Costumes



Jennifer in full costume

**B**ill Taylor and Jennifer Sturdy are now performing in beautiful costumes made by Geraldine Craig in Scotland. We carried out extensive research into what styles may have been popular in Sumer, what kind of material would have been likely to have been used and what ornamentation may have been in vogue. Evidence comes mainly from terra cotta reliefs, and some published books about costumes from ancient times. The result is stunning garments, as authentic as we can hope for. Very many thanks to Geraldine for all her efforts on our behalf.



Geraldine Craig

## Greenwich Early Music Festival

**T**he Early Music Festival is an annual 3 day event, focusing on instruments and music from medieval times onwards. In November 2008, the Gold Lyre of Ur was invited to be the centrepiece, being the earliest stringed instrument known to exist. It was displayed in its glass case at the top of the steps of the Painted Hall, Royal Naval College, Greenwich, itself a spectacular venue. Andy Lowings and Jennifer Sturdy talked themselves hoarse over the 3 days of the Festival. Visitors frequently declared that it was the most stunning instrument on display, and it engendered a great deal of interest, both from local and international visitors. Many expressed a desire to hear the instrument being played, and as concerts are a regular feature of the festival, perhaps in the future it may be possible to take part in the concert programme.



The Lyre in the Painted Hall

The Gold Lyre is featured at Greenwich on YouTube video:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2jZLgBBmyo>

## RADIO & TV COVERAGE

### Catalan Radio

**O**ne of the visitors to the Greenwich Early Music Festival was Xavier Romero, a journalist working for Catalan Radio. He presents a weekly programme on musical events in London, and decided to focus on the Gold Lyre of Ur, as he had been so entranced by the story of its origins, the making of the replica, and the current performance schedule. The broadcast was in December 2008, and it is gratifying to note that there is international interest in the work that we do.

### Canadian Broadcast for the Lyre of Ur

**R**adio journalist Anjali Nayar has completed her second radio piece on us. For Canada National Radio, this time. The programme is based on the lyre players of Africa, and Kenya in particular. It has excerpts from Ayub Ogada talking about Luo tribal music and Andy Lowings talking about connections with the Middle East. The programme was broadcast twice on national radio and is available on the CBC archives.

[http://podcast.cbc.ca/mp3/dispatches\\_20090316\\_13159.mp3](http://podcast.cbc.ca/mp3/dispatches_20090316_13159.mp3)

### BBC WORLD SERVICE

**A**njali Nayar's programme is to be extended and adapted for the BBC and will be broadcast on the World Service shortly, affording worldwide coverage of the Lyre Project's activities!

### Interview on British Satellite News

**D**uring the Greenwich Early Music Festival, a team from British Satellite News, conducted an interview with Jennifer Sturdy about the origins and the making of the Gold Lyre of Ur. The TV camera focused on each part of the lyre in turn as it was being described. This programme is available for a limited period of time on the internet, but is also syndicated to other broadcasting companies around the world.

[www.bsn.org.uk/view\\_all.php?id=14619](http://www.bsn.org.uk/view_all.php?id=14619)

### BBC TV LOOK EAST

**T**he appearance of the Gold Lyre in Peterborough Cathedral as part of the Peterborough Festival in June is to be covered by the BBC TV Look East team. This will hopefully guarantee a good audience for the performance on Friday 26 June.

## SCHOOL VISITS

**I**n November 2007 Jennifer Sturdy was invited to speak to the Sixth Form at the **Brigidine School, Windsor**, as part of their liberal studies programme. She gave an illustrated talk about the making of the lyre, including the amazing stories of acquiring the material from as far afield as South Africa and Iraq. The students were very interested to hear about the archaeological excavations by Sir Leonard Woolley, and found the description of the bodies found in Queen Pu-Abi's grave particularly moving.

**I**n December 2008 Jennifer was invited to give a similar talk to the Archaeological Society of **St Mary's School, Ascot**. The girls were delighted to see the pictures and hear the account of the Lyre Project's work. They were all very keen to hear the lyre being played, and were moved by hearing the story of the death of the last lyre player. The school has a very active music department, and it is hoped that they will invite the Gold Lyre of Ur back in performance. We would like to express our thanks to St Mary's School for their kind donation to the Gold Lyre of Ur Project.

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### **New CD of the Gold Lyre in recording!**

**I**n September 2008 we drove to deepest Cotswolds where Mark Harmer was waiting for us at Blockley Church, with his forest of recording equipment! For two days we covered our whole repertoire again and again, and despite lawn-mowers, jets and passing screaming children managed to create an entire new CD of music and voice.

Mark Harmer kindly devoted more than a week of his time after this, and we are wholly grateful for his constant commitment to the project.

Thank you to Blockley Church committee who allowed us the use of the church and to Lynda Grier who provided us all with overnight accommodation nearby, in her quaint cottage in Abbots Morton.



CD Cover

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### **Film: "The Harp"**

**A**s part of the film "**The Harp**", introduced and narrated by the Royal Harpist **Catrin Finch**, Andy Lowings was interviewed and pictured with the Gold Lyre of Ur, being the earliest known form of a harp-type instrument. In 2008 the film finally got an airing on BBC4, and it is stunning to hear how many people saw it, noticed our presence on it, and subsequently contacted us.

The final accolade is that the film can now be watched on YouTube, and so must now be reaching an even wider audience!  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=WPylNyV3-4E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WPylNyV3-4E)





### **Future Events**

June 25th / 26th: ... Lecture and Performance in Peterborough Cathedral  
August 28th / 29th: ..... Stamford International Harp Festival  
September 26th ..... Lincoln Cathedral  
November 2009. .... Liverpool University Ladies' Club

Contact us for further information

**We would be delighted to receive offers of support, invitations to perform.**

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#### **LYRE OF UR NEWS 5**

Copy ..... Jennifer Sturdy & Andy Lowings

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