

FRONT PANEL , THE SOUND BOX OF THE GREAT LYRE
Ur (Present-day Muqaiyir, Iraq). 2550- 2400 B.C
Wood with shell inlaid in bitumen, height 12^{1/4} X
4^{1/2}" (31.1 X 11cm). University of Pennsylvania
Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology,
Philadelphia

In the shape of an inverted trapezoid most of the wooden ornament through the extant imagery on the reconstructed lyre's sound box. Artist provided a fascinating glimpse into a fanciful banquet in the Mesopotamian netherworld.



Based upon archaeological evidence, the bull-headed lyre was likely the ancient Near East's most popular stringed instrument in the mid-3rd Millennium B.C a small number of cuneiform tablets with wedge-shaped inscriptions described how to tune and play it. Other archaeologist provided valuable information about the seven standard musical scales and fingering techniques. While the contemporary Egyptian Lyre was limited to four strings. Sumerians version were constructed with 11 to 13 allowing for more elaborate compositions. The Great Lyre sounded something like a bass viol (ancient instrument).

This athletic man probably meant to represent the deceased. His long hair and a full beard denote a semi-divine status. He is naked except for a wide belt, and he clasps two rearing human-headed bulls. The imagery on the harp may have been inspired in part by the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.

This scene shows animal attendants, bringing food and drinks for the feast. On the left a hyena, assuming the role of a butcher with a knife in its belt, carries a table piled high with meat. A lion follows with a large jar and pouring vessel.

This one scene depicts a trio of animal musicians a seated donkey plucks the strings of a bull lyre showing how such instruments were played, while a standing bear braces the instrument's frame and a seated animal, perhaps a fox, plays a *sistrum* (a kind of rattle).

Scorpion man are associated with the land of demons, the mountains of sunrise and sunset which are part of the journey made by the dead. The scorpion man is attended by a gazelle standing on its hind legs and holding out two tall cups, perhaps filled from the large container from which a ladle protrudes. (Stokstad 34-35)