


Pythagoras plays his lyre

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What is the wisest thing? Number.

What is the most beautiful? Harmony.

“On the Pythagorean Way of Life”

Iamblichus (3rd century AD)

Pythagoras plays his lyre
surrounded by mathematicians.
We sing paeans as he strikes
the cords:

*We discovered the
law of the cosmos:
All is number!
Mysterious proportions!
The way strings vibrate
to harmonic ratios
makes music sound
like heaven.
The sacred beans sprout
in the nearby fields.
All animals are part
of our family.
In the interval between
earth and the firmament
planets circle and hum
in concert.
Each One a note
in the grand symphony
of all creation.
We guard
its innermost secret.*

The music wafts upward
like smoke from burnt incense
pleasing the gods who watch us
play and pass.