

## 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.