

Ugly Little Fretet

Ode to a ratio

What are your virtues, little 17/18?
Surely not that you are harmonious,
You, the most jangling of all discords
Like your brothers and sisters
15/16, 16/17 and 18/19, and 19/20
A miserable squabbling bunch,
And surely not because we love
Your shared harmonics
of which there are none within earshot.

So what then are your virtues
That make you the little brick
From which great mansions and cathedrals are built?
A single one.
Who needs more?
Unlike your next of kin 16/17 and 18/19
When when repeated a dozen times
You reach the height of the magnificent 1/2,
The mighty octave
To whom all tribes on earth pay homage
And en route you get close enough to
Other venerables 2/3, 3/4, 4/5, 5/6,
And those of lesser grandure 6/7, 7/8, 8/9, and 9/10
Well, close enough to fool
Most of the people most of the time.

Bob Stuckey 2021