

Kepler describes the harmony of the universe through geometry, music, astrology, and astronomy in an abundantly illustrated 17th-century edition.

Kepler, Johannes. *Harmonices mvndi libri v. Lincii Austriae* [Linz, Austria], sumptibus Godofredi Tampachii excudebat Ioannes Plancvs, 1619. 12 inches (310 mm), 4 pp. 1., 52, 55–66, 255 pp.

The fame of Johannes Kepler (1571–1630) rests on his system of celestial mechanics, which substituted for the old harmonies of static geocentrism a dynamic heliocentric astronomy. An ardent follower of Copernicus, and an assistant, associate and eventual editor of Tycho Brahe, Kepler continued the work of his great predecessors in many a new direction. He is best remembered for his three laws of planetary motion. The first law, that planetary orbits are elliptical, with the sun at one focus, was published in Kepler's *Astronomia Nova* (1609), as was an adumbration of the second law, which was not fully formulated until his work on the *Tabulae Rudolphinae* (1627), available on **rarebookroom.org** as "keptab." The third law of planetary motion, that the square of the periodic time of a circling planet is proportional to the cube of its mean distance from the sun is first stated in Book Five of the *Harmonices Mundi* here reproduced.

The "Harmonies" of the title are four in number, the expressions of God's model for the universe as conveyed through Geometry (Books 1 and 2), Music (Book 3), Astrology (Book 4) and Astronomy (Book 5). Aspects abundantly illustrated here include the musical scale, and the mathematical ratios of the five regular polyhedrons. Book Two describes and illustrates (**Spread 33**) two of the four stellated dodecahedrons. Since their rediscovery by Louis Poincot in 1810, the four are known as the "Kepler-Poincot Solids." Kepler's astrological system of Book Four was itself geometrical, positing a human soul of geometrical form that interacted with the zodiac to produce epiphanic moments when the resulting temporary angular conjunction corresponded to those of any one of Kepler's beloved regular polygons.

The bookplate of the great scientific book collector Herbert McLean Evans (1882–1971) appears on the front pastedown (**Spread 2**). Evans's scientific fame comes from his discovery of Vitamin E, his bibliographical reputation from his little exhibition

catalogue *Exhibition of First Editions of Epochal Achievements in the History of Science* (Berkeley, 1934). Evans' life was all of a piece: his scientific career consisted of a series of experiments, his bibliophily was expressed in a series of collections, and his private life incorporated a series of wives and mistresses. It was an equilibrium punctuated (respectively) by publication, dispersal, and divorce. Over the course of a lifetime, he gathered, cherished, and released perhaps 20,000 books, never owning more than a thousand or two at a time. Compelled to dispose of his books, usually owing to overstretched resources or a divorce settlement, Evans would then buy back again, one by one, most of the titles and at least some of the actual copies, developing a symbiotic relation with the book trade. In few collectors was the here-today-gone-tomorrow spirit of "Nunc mihi, mox aliis" more highly developed. From Evans' hands the book passed into the Barchas Collection (**Spread 3**).