On the Determination of the Golden Ratio ($\phi$) by a Series of Theatrical Approximations

_Iggy McGovern_

For The Golden Gang

The Golden What? [$\phi = \infty$] nonsense!

Stairs, calipers, geometry & tea [$\phi = 1.000$] Wrong!

Pyramids, flagellation of Christ,
Yeats, Blue Tack, a plan, a list [$\phi = 2.000$] Poor!

Barababalab, Bridge, Spike
red nose sphere, some tyke
whips the director’s bike [$\phi = 1.500$] Average!

The set of all possible sets;
stage lights, strings and frets;
the Eye of God
getting the nod;
a touch of your Swami Beck-ets [$\phi = 1.666$] Improving!

This vanishing trope
of Indian rope,
a luminous spiral,
right-handed chiral
held with the aid
of stiff metal braid:
O make it your stop,
the local Pound Shop [$\phi = 1.600$] Better!

Dazzling bright
Vitruvian kit
Of LED light;
poet’s keep-fit
barefoot in park;
camera-shy
need not apply;
leap in the dark,
finding his mark;
—Wheel, Catherine
—Sire, depend on it;
just the one line
short of a sonnet [$\phi = 1.625$] Close!
‘Pythagoras planned it,’ as the poet said.
‘Ulster says Noh’—the masked sage.
Simon & Garf: ‘Is the theatre really dead?’
   Cube: love’s dearth.
   Colour it blue.
   Melancholic—Earth
      Icosohedron: splutter.
      Colour it green.
   Phlegmatic—Water
      Octahedron: wondrous fair.
      Colour it yellow.
   Sanguine—Air
      Tetrahedron: desire.
      Colour it red.
   Choleric—Fire
      Dodecahedron: either/either.
      Colour it black or white,
      to be determined—Aether

While I stand here like some ‘apprentice mage’,
upon my soul, you’ll see a Golden Dawn
before I take this ‘free play’ off the stage \[\phi = 1.615\] Enough?

— from Safe House (Dedalus Press 2010)

Author’s Note: This poem is a record of events during a weeklong workshop organized by a Dublin theatre group called Barabbalab; the theme was the use of the Golden Ratio and the Classical Forms in theatre. I was never quite sure why I was invited to take part, but I chose to write it up as a Fibonacci poem, bearing in mind that the ratio of successive pairs in the Fibonacci series approaches the Golden Ratio.