

SPACE ODYSSEY for Four Harps (1971)

by Aristid von Würtzler

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Aristid von Würtzler (1925-1997) was a Hungarian-American harpist, teacher, conductor and composer. In 1970, he formed the New York Harp Ensemble – a touring harp quartet – for which he arranged and composed almost 200 pieces. Space Odyssey is one of these compositions.

This edition has been compiled using five original sources: two manuscript scores (one of which is more of a sketch), two out of the four manuscript parts (Harps 1 and 3), and an LP recording performed by the New York Harp Ensemble under von Würtzler's direction. All of these sources may be found at the International Harp Archives at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. During the compilation process, the following three significant kinds of changes were made:

1. Updated symbols. In 1971, von Würtzler created his own symbols for the innovative sound effects used. Now, most of these effects are common and are notated differently. This edition uses the more standard symbols published in *Writing for the Pedal Harp* by Ruth K. Inglefield and Lou Anne Neill. (The original symbols are also shown in the Glossary for reference.)
2. Resolving inconsistencies among sources. The five original sources do not always agree with each other. Discrepancies of rhythm and accidentals were found. These discrepancies were settled by using the source that most closely matched the recording.
3. Creating a more coherent score. The piece is clearly divided into three sections: the first and last being more rhythmical and metered, and the central "SPACE" section being more improvisatory and unmetered. The original manuscripts had very few time signatures and only dotted measure lines. This edition includes rehearsal letters in the improvisatory section, and adds time signatures and solid measure lines to the other two sections.

Original Program Note from the Manuscript by Aristid von Würtzler

Here the composer's imagination jumps from "heaven to earth and from earth to heaven." In this, special never-before-heard sound effects are produced without any electronic or gimmick aids – nothing extra is used other than the tuning keys of the harp. Interesting glissandi underline the melodic lines. A very special effect is brought out by having paper inserted between the strings and these produce a story-like effect depicting the war-like nature of man. The work depicts nature versus vice. The 25 special new sound effects in tonight's concert could not possibly be produced by an orchestra – and these serve as wheels in a journey through the eras of the cosmos – a psychedelic sound picture within a framework of musical language.

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