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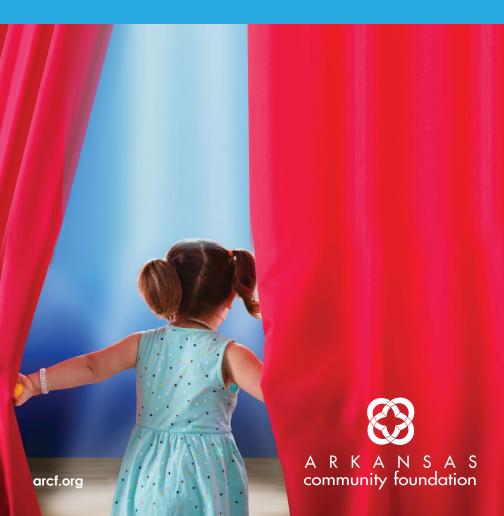
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FROM THE CEO



Dear ASO supporters, music lovers, people who took piano when young and have always regretted quitting, former high school band or ASYO members, and anyone who is out for a night of fun and relaxation,

I am pleased to welcome you here today to hear your Arkansas Symphony Orchestra perform with new Music Director Geoffrey Robson. I could not be more excited about the future. I am so thankful that Geoffrey was selected to lead the orchestra by a



unanimous decision of the Search Committee, chaired by Dr. Denise Compton. Geoff cares deeply about the ASO, Little Rock, children, music education, and Arkansas. We could not be in better hands with our new leader. Deepest gratitude to the musicians, board members, and staff that served and gave hundreds of hours to this search.

Our next important work is building the ASO Stella Boyle Smith Music Center. One hundred years ago, Stella Boyle Smith invited a group of musicians to perform in her living room. In fall of 2024, ASO will finally have its first permanent home and be able to broadcast the music of ASO into every living room in Arkansas! Thank you to Brigita Gardner, Chair of the Crescendo Campaign, for leading us through an \$11.75M capital campaign to bring this project to a reality.

Thank you to all of you who contributed to make the new community music center a reality for our state. We envision the ASO Stella Boyle Smith Music Center being a "Radically-Welcoming Hub of Musical Activity for All Arkansans." We want everyone who walks into the space to see themselves there. A committee of community leaders led by Susan Marsh contributed ideas for how they want to use the music center to further their missions and serve our children, seniors, and community members with musicmaking and education.

To ensure the future of current programs and to take full advantage of the possibilities of the new Music Center, the ASO is embarking on a \$3M endowment campaign, *Encore.* As you may be reading or hearing in the news, the performing arts are navigating new challenges in the aftermath of the pandemic. By adding \$3M to the current \$10M endowment, we will ensure that the ASO remains financially healthy and continues to consistently balance its budget. The ASO has balanced its budget for 14 years, which enabled us to continue serving the community with music during the pandemic. Sustaining a solid financial foundation enables ASO to employ musicians of impeccable artistry to live, teach, and play in Little Rock and the state of Arkansas.

Thank you all for being here today for your Arkansas Symphony Orchestra. If you are a subscriber or concert member, thank you for your commitment. If you would like to become a subscriber or concert member, or are interested in participating on the Board of Advisors or Directors, please reach out to me at clittlejohn@arkansassymphony.org. If you want to learn more about ASO, the programs of the E. Lee Ronnel Music Academy, or see more of the new logo designed by Cranford Co., please visit our website at www.ArkansasSymphony.org.

Thank you for your participation. I hope you enjoy yourself and come back again and again.

Christine hottly oh

Christina Littlejohn





Dear Music Lover,

It is an honor to welcome you to the symphony as the Music Director of your Arkansas Symphony Orchestra! This is a historic year for ASO and the performing arts in central Arkansas, and I am so happy that you are taking part in it with us.

This is a season with something for everybody. If this is your first time attending, we welcome you and hope this will be the first of many world-class performances you enjoy! We would love to hear about your experience, and hope you'll reach out if you have any questions.

I have never been more optimistic about the future of orchestral music. In putting together concerts, I like to mix pieces of music that are historically famous with music composed by contemporary living talent, and music that history has improperly overlooked. There is more great music being written right now for orchestra than at any point I can remember. Composers you'll hear this year on our Masterworks series, such as Anna Clyne, Jonathan Bailey Holland, Chen Yi, and others, have such an extraordinary wealth of influences and styles in their music that it is inspiring, genre-bending greatness with every note. Older works get new life breathed into them each time the ASO takes them up: transcendent moments of beauty for us to enjoy together as an audience and performers.

Orchestras can now play entire film scores live while the movie plays on a big screen above the orchestra. This technological feat, and the resulting performance from your ASO, gives new meaning to the term high-definition! Capathia Jenkins, who brought the house DOWN when she performed *Tribute to Aretha Franklin* with us, returns this spring in *She's Got Soul*, which will be equally memorable as we celebrate the great American genre of soul music. We will celebrate the total solar eclipse in April 2024, with a performance of *The Planets*, a celestial musical journey through the heavens and its accompanying astrology.

Lastly, there is such an astounding array of musical talent in our city and across the community; it is one of my great joys that we can seek out and feature local artists, support emerging careers, and uplift us all. We have never been more dedicated to making live music performance one of the great connectors in our community. This is why we embarked on a first-of-its-kind project for an orchestra with our upcoming *Arkansas Talent* performances. Six finalists will sing with the symphony in May, competing for the chance to be our headlining vocalist for next season's *Home for the Holidays* concerts.

Your ASO is more accessible than ever. The \$9/month concert membership allows one to enjoy any of our concerts for a consistent low monthly rate. It makes a perfect gift for someone you think will enjoy our music! Are you an amateur orchestral musician? Our Community Orchestra, directed by our new Associate Conductor—Valery Saul—is a fabulous opportunity to get back into the music-making community! Our youth orchestras are an incredible opportunity for students to grow musically, learn leadership skills, and have a lot of fun doing it. Beginner child or adult lessons, volunteer opportunities, social gatherings with music as the common denominator... Visit www.arkansassymphony.org to get started.

Thank you again for attending this performance! We are YOUR orchestra, professional musicians dedicated to performing at the highest level, and sharing the depth of our love for live music to all of Little Rock and the central Arkansas community.

Geoffrey Robson



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Saturday, March 9, 2024 • 7:30 PM Sunday, March 10, 2024 • 3:00 PM Robinson Performance Hall Little Rock, Arkansas

UAMS.

FIRST ORION POPS SERIES

She's Got Soul

Geoffrey Robson, *conductor* Capathia Jenkins, *vocalist*

BACKGROUND VOCALS Rajdulari • Randy Chalmers • Sydney Brooke Harper

BELL/SMITH/BROWN, ET AL arr. Sam Shoup

Celebration

Ain't Nobody

ADKINS/EPWORTH Rolling in the Deep arr. Daryl McKenzie

DAVID WOLINSKI arr. Daryl McKenzie

BAKER/JOHNSON/BIAS Sweet Love arr. Daryl McKenzie

> STEVIE WONDER arr. Michael Mossman

GAMBLE/HUFF arr. Daryl McKenzie

JIM WEATHERLY arr. Sam Shoup

Midnight Train to Georgia

HAYES/PORTER arr. Roger Holmes

Soul Man

Sir Duke

Love Train

She's Got Soul continued

PHARRELL WILLIAMS arr. John Bachalis	Нарру
DOLLY PARTON arr. Daryl McKenzie	I Will Always Love You

INTERMISSION

ROD TEMPERTON arr. Bill Holcombe	Thriller
ADKINS/EPWORTH arr. J.A.C Redford	Theme from <i>Skyfall</i>
DIANE WARREN arr. Sam Shoup	Unbreak My Heart
McKAY/WILLIS arr. Chris Walden	September
ADU/ST. JOHN arr. Cy Payne	Smooth Operator
McFARLANE arr. Matt Podd	I Am Strong
JAMES BROWN arr. Sam Shoup	Papa's Got a Brand New Bag I Got You (I Feel Good)
TRADITIONAL arr. Matt Podd	This Little Light of Mine

PLEASE SILENCE ALL ELECTRONIC DEVICES. THANK YOU.

Use of cameras and recording equipment is not permitted in the concert hall. The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra is supported in part by a grant from the Arkansas Arts Council, an agency of the Department of Arkansas Heritage.

ORCHESTRA



She's Got Soul

GEOFFREY ROBSON, Conductor, *Pamela Diane Stephens Conductor's Chair* CAPATHIA JENKINS, Vocalist RAJDULARI • RANDY CHALMERS • SYDNEY BROOKE HARPER, Background Vocals

VIOLIN

Andrew Irvin Concertmaster Dora Paley Ronnel Concertmaster's Chair Kiril Laskarov Concertmaster Katherine Williamson Assistant Concertmaster *†Meredith Maddox Hicks Principal Second Violin Eric M. Hayward Memorial Chair ‡Linnaea Brophy †Charlotte Crosmer Leanne Day-Simpson ‡Trisha McGovern Freeney Beth Massa Sandra McDonald Tom McDonald Jordan Musarave Kenta Nomura

†Lauren Pokorzynski Tarrah Reynolds Magdalena Ryszkowski Dan Santelices Leigh Wing

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*Katherine Reynolds Principal Dr. Howard & Celia Barnhard Chair Joe Joyner †Timothy MacDuff Thomas McDonald Julian Pranata Beth Robison

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David Gerstein Principal Linda Garner Riggs Chair Casey Buck Rafael León †Travis Scharer Kristin Smith ‡Jacob Wunsch

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FLUTE Carolyn Brown *Principal* Leanne Hampton Gabriel Vega

PICCOLO Gabriel Vega

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ENGLISH HORN Beth Wheeler Principal

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BASS CLARINET Lyle Wong

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SAXOPHONE Barry McVinney Matt Taylor Brandon Dorris Dave Williams II Kaleb Knight

HORN David Renfro *Principal* Robin Dauer Brent Shires Tyler Bjerke Durham Hill

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Andrew Stadler Tyler Helms *George Worthen Memorial Chair* Carl Mason Sam Oliveri

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PIANO/SYNTHESIZER

Carl Anthony Principal

GUITAR Matt Stone

ELECTRIC BASS Brian Wolverton

ARTISTS





GEOFFREY ROBSON, Music Director

Geoffrey Robson has emerged as a force of artistic leadership throughout the U.S. and the state of Arkansas. As Artistic Director and principal conductor of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, his dynamic leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in state-wide and national visibility for the organization. By overseeing an accelerated shift to virtual offerings of performances and educational content, Maestro Robson ensured continued success of the orchestra and

continued employment of all musicians and staff. The orchestra's online *Bedtime with Bach* series received nationwide acclaim and was featured by the *Washington Post* and the *Kelly Clarkson Show*.

In 2017, he was awarded the Respighi Prize in Conducting by the Chamber Orchestra of New York, and led the group in performance at Carnegie Hall. He has worked with renowned artists such as Gil Shaham, Midori, Rachel Barton Pine, Zuill Bailey, Vadym Kholodenko, Alexander Markov, Mandy Gonzalez, the Beach Boys, and many others.

During his tenure in Arkansas, he has conducted critically acclaimed and sold-out masterworks, pops, chamber, and children's concerts. He frequently collaborates with organizations such as Ballet Arkansas, Arkansas Children's Theater, Opera in the Rock, the Chamber Music Society of Little Rock, and numerous choral groups. He also writes, records, and produces *At the Symphony*, a concert preview radio series on KLRE Classical 90.5 in Little Rock.

Robson also currently serves as Artistic Director of the Faulkner Chamber Music Festival. In this role, he curates a summer concert series and serves as director of the chamber music camp, which provides a unique, immersive experience to music students in the art of playing chamber music. He has served on the music faculty of Hendrix College, and was Visiting Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Central Arkansas, where he conducted the Conway Symphony Orchestra.

He has conducted numerous ballet and opera productions including *The Nutcracker*, *LaBohème*, and *Madama Butterfly* with the Plano Symphony (Texas) and Opera in the Rock (Little Rock). As a founding member of The Chelsea Symphony (New York), he conducted numerous sold-out performances and served as an artistic advisor, ensuring the growth and success of the organization.

A champion of new music, Robson collaborates with and explores the music of renowned living composers. In 2016, he conducted the San Juan (Colorado) Symphony in the world-premiere of James Stephenson's *Concerto for Hope* with celebrated trumpeter Ryan Anthony. He served as arranger, conductor, and violinist for the world-premiere of *Billy Blythe*, a one-act opera based on the life of a young Bill Clinton, by Bonnie Montgomery. He conducted the premiere of *Into the Beautiful North* by Joe Brent, performed by the 9 Horses trio, as well as the premiere of *Richard III, A Crown of Roses, A Crown of Thorns*, an opera by Karen Griebling. In 2021 and 2022, he secured commissions of new works by Tania León and James Lee III, which were performed by the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra.

As a violinist, Robson is an avid chamber musician and regularly collaborates with musicians across the country. He served as concertmaster of the Connecticut Virtuosi Chamber Orchestra and as Assistant Concert master of the Waterbury Symphony (Connecticut). He is recognized for his skill and versatility as a violinist and fiddle player, and has established himself as a highly sought-after studio musician. He creates and performs string and orchestral arrangements for recording artists to assist them in achieving their musical goals in the studio.

Utilizing his extensive studio experience, Robson conducted and served as executive producer for the 2021 recording of Florence Price's *Concerto in One Movement*, with the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra. He is also an orchestral pops arranger and his music has been featured in numerous ASO performances.

Robson studied orchestral conducting at the Mannes College of Music in New York City under the tutelage of David Hayes and holds violin performance degrees from Yale University and the Michigan State University Honors College. Primary violin teachers include Erick Friedman, Dmitri Berlinsky, James Krehbiel, and I-fu Wang.

He studied conducting at Yale University with Lawrence Leighton Smith, Edward Cumming, and Shinik Hahm. Other notable teachers include John Farrer, Neil Thomson, Joana Carneiro, Dirk Brossé, and Larry Rachleff.



CAPATHIA JENKINS, Vocalist

Capathia Jenkins can definitely act but all those who know her also know that this diva can blow and blow and blow you right off this planet. This woman is grappling with two dueling passions, each with a strong grip: acting and music, yet she refuses to pick one because they both represent her soul. Capathia approaches a song the same way she approaches a script, like an artist. She looks for the nuances, the secret hidden within the notes or text. She seeks the melody, harmony, and rhythm. She asks herself: what am I trying to say? What do I want my audience to experience with me? She wants to take her audience on a journey.

This Brooklyn-born and raised actress most recently starred as 'Medda' in the hit Disney production of *Newsies* on Broadway. She made her Broadway debut in *The Civil War*, where she created the role of Harriet Jackson. She then starred in the Off-Broadway 2000 revival of *Godspell*, where she wowed audiences with her stirring rendition of 'Turn Back, O Man' which can still be heard on the original cast recording. She returned to Broadway in *The Look of Love* and was critically acclaimed for her performances of the Bacharach/David hits. Ms. Jenkins then created the roles of 'The Washing Machine' in *Caroline, Or Change* and 'Frieda May' in *Martin Short: Fame Becomes Me*, where she sang 'Stop the Show' and brought the house down every night.

In 2007, she went back to Off-Broadway and starred in *(mis)Understanding Mammy: The Hattie McDaniel Story* for which she was nominated for a Drama Desk Award. She was also seen in Nora Ephron's *Love, Loss, and What I Wore.*

ARTISTS continued

An active concert artist, Ms. Jenkins has appeared with orchestras around the world including the Cleveland Orchestra, Houston Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony (with Marvin Hamlisch), National Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Utah Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, San Antonio Symphony, Memphis Symphony, Nashville Symphony, Toledo Symphony, Colorado Symphony, Toronto Symphony, Edmonton Symphony, Calgary Philharmonic, Kansas City Symphony, San Diego Symphony, and the Hong Kong Philharmonic. She was a soloist with the Festival Cesky Krumlov in the Czech Republic. In 2011, Capathia had the great honor of performing in the *Broadway Ambassadors to Cuba* concert as part of the Festival De Teatro De La Habana. Ms. Jenkins was a guest soloist with Peter Nero and the Philly Pops and with the Cincinnati Pope.

Her television credits include 30 Rock, The Practice, Law & Order SVU, The Sopranos, and Law & Order. She can be seen in the 2012 film Musical Chairs, directed by Susan Seidelman. She can be heard on the following film soundtracks: Nine, Chicago, and Legally Blonde 2.







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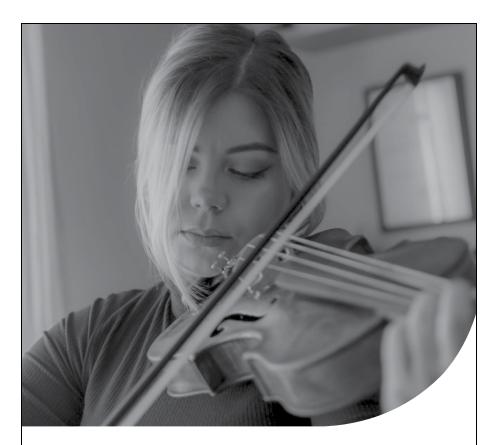
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ASO

The Arkansas Symphony would like to thank the following donors who have made a lasting commitment to great symphonic music and music education in Arkansas through their gifts to the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra Foundation. The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra is now in its 58th season, and these gifts to the ASO Foundation help ensure future generations can enjoy the artistic excellence and education programs of the orchestra for the next 50 seasons and beyond.

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The E. Lee Ronnel Music Academy expands ASO's capacity to reach and serve Arkansas children and adults through music education programs. These are designed to develop **confidence**, **creative thinking** and **a strong work ethic** that will enhance students' musical endeavors and life skills. The E. Lee Ronnel Music Academy will also support the development of future music programs in the Stella Boyle Smith Music Center that may include adult music classes, bucket band, children's choir and more.

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Learn More About Our Programs! ArkansasSymphony.org/education



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ASO's year-round music education programs are vital for the students of Arkansas, especially as most are receiving only the state minimum amount of arts education each week during the school year. Filling this gap in music education is only possible with the support of our community members, donors, and patrons. A gift today will ensure ASO can continue to provide high-quality music education and engagement opportunities to Arkansans of all ages.

There are many ways to support the music and education programs you love—the ASO welcomes you to give in the way that is right for you!



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PROGRAM



Saturday, April 6, 2024 • 7:30 PM Sunday, April 7, 2024 • 3:00 PM Robinson Performance Hall Little Rock, Arkansas



STELLA BOYLE SMITH MASTERWORKS SERIES

Holst's The Planets

Geoffrey Robson, *conductor* UA Little Rock's Women's Choir – *Dr. Lorissa Mason, director*

ANNA CLYNE . (b. 1980)

Night Ferry (2011)

22'

51'

INTERMISSION

GUSTAV HOLST (1874-1934)

- I. Mars, the Bringer of War
- II. Venus, the Bringer of Peace
- III. Mercury, the Winged Messenger

The Planets, Op. 32: Suite for Larger Orchestra

- IV. Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity
- V. Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age
- VI. Uranus, the Magician
- VII. Neptune, the Mystic

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NIGHT FERRY / Anna Clyne

b. London, England / March 9, 1980

Described as a "composer of uncommon gifts and unusual methods" in a *New York Times* profile and as "fearless" by *NPR*, Grammy-nominated Anna Clyne is one of the most in-demand composers today, working with orchestras, choreographers, filmmakers, and visual artists around the world.

She has been commissioned and presented by the world's most dynamic and revered arts institutions, including London's Barbican, Carnegie Hall, Kennedy Center, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and her music has opened such events as the Edinburgh International Festival and the New York Philharmonic's 2021-2022 season. In 2022-2023, she served as Composer-in-Residence with the Philharmonia Orchestra, as well as the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra in the 2023-2024 season.

Night Ferry is an orchestral composition in one movement that was commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. It was first premiered under conductor Riccardo Muti on February 9, 2012.

At the behest of a suggestion from Maestro Muti, Anna Clyne looked for inspiration from composer Franz Schubert, who suffered from a type of mood disorder known as cyclothymia. Clyne described this disorder and its inspiration for *Night Ferry* in the score's program notes, writing:

"This illness sometimes manifests in rapid shifts between the two states and also in periods of mixed states whereby symptoms of both extremes are present. This illness shadowed Schubert throughout his adulthood, and it impacted and inspired his art dramatically. His friends report that in its most troublesome form, he suffered periods of "dark despair and violent anger." Schubert asserted that whenever he wrote songs of love, he wrote songs of pain, and whenever he wrote songs of pain, he wrote songs of love. Extremes were an organic part of his make-up."

Clyne added, "In its essence, *Night Ferry* is a sonic portrait of voyages; voyages within nature and of physical, mental, and emotional states. Additionally, the title of the piece is from Irish poet Seamus Heaney's *Elegy* for the author Robert Lowell, who also suffered from manic depression."

While composing the work, Clyne simultaneously painted a series of seven large canvasses for cross-inspiration. She later wrote, "Upon the canvas I layered paint, charcoal, pencil, pen, ribbon, gauze, snippets of text from Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, fragments of Gustav Doré's illustrations for this wonderfully evocative poem, and a selection of quotes from artists afflicted with, and blessed by, this fascinating illness."

THE PLANETS, OP. 32 / Gustav Holst

b. Cheltenham, England / September 21, 1874; d. London, England / May 25, 1934

During a tour of Spain in 1913, a fellow traveler introduced Holst to astrology. Soon afterwards, he wrote to a friend, "...recently the character of each planet suggested lots to me, and I have been studying astrology fairly closely." The large-scale orchestral suite that resulted from this interest depicts the astrological character of seven planets in our solar system (as opposed to their mythological personalities, although the portrait of Venus manages to conjure both her mythological beauty and her astrological peacefulness). Only seven planets, since Holst decided not to include the Earth, and the existence of Pluto was not confirmed until 1930.

He completed *Mars*, the opening movement, in a rural cottage during August 1914, and the remaining six movements over the next two years. One reason for his not completing it more quickly was his fear that no orchestra big enough to handle his lavish demands would be available during wartime.

He hadn't counted on the generosity of a wealthy friend, Balfour Gardiner. This noble patron hired a hall, an orchestra, and a conductor to rehearse and perform *The Planets* for an invited audience of 300. That performance was given by the New Queen's Hall Orchestra under Adrian Boult (later Sir Adrian) on September 29, 1918. The first public performance of the complete work followed on November 15, 1920, with Albert Coates conducting the London Symphony Orchestra,

The opening movement, *Mars, the Bringer of War*, portrays a world in the grip of cold, implacable brutality. Brass and percussion hold center stage throughout, pounding out harsh blocks of sound over an implacable, motorlike rhythmic tread. Holst's use of five beats to the bar, instead of the usual two, three, or four, increases the uneasiness. After a grindingly dissonant climax, the death machine pauses desolately for a moment, only to power recklessly ahead to a devastating conclusion.

Early audiences were convinced that Holst intended *Mars* as a portrait of the Great War, where in fact he had completed it just before that conflict broke out. Perhaps he considered it a cautionary vision of the madness and inhumanity of all wars. His daughter Imogen recalled that listeners at the private premiere, "found the clamor of *Mars* almost unbearable after having lived through four years of a war that was still going on."

A solo horn summons *Venus, the Bringer of Peace*. Here is total contrast: a calm, tranquil reverie, set far from the scene of any conflict, scored in delicate pastels and shot through with gorgeous solo passages.

Two contrasted scherzos follow. *Mercury, the Winged Messenger* flits by on transparent, gossamer wings. Holst associated this character with the process of human thought. Something of that swift, quicksilver process may be heard in the chuckling woodwinds, darting strings, and tinkling celesta.

Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity, on the other hand, has both jovial feet planted firmly on the ground. Robustly scored tunes reflecting Holst's study of English folk dances drive the opening and closing sections. In the central panel, the strings introduce a stately, hymn-like theme evoking a more ceremonial type of rejoicing. Words by Spring Rice were later added to it for the patriotic song *I Vow to Thee, My Country.* In the delirious coda, the very stars and planets seem to join the swirling crowds of dancers.

PROGRAM NOTES continued

Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age was Holst's favorite movement of the suite. It certainly communicates the greatest emotional depth. This miniature tone poem set forth his views on the stages of human life: the uncertain beginning (restless activity over slowly alternating chords in flutes and harps); the struggles and heartbreaks of maturation (a solemn march building slowly to a harsh climax); and finally, gratifyingly, the emergence in late years of wisdom, with its serene acceptance of imperfection and mortality.

Next comes the dynamic conjuring act of *Uranus, the Magician.* Brass cast the spell. As in *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* by Paul Dukas, the bassoons are the first to respond. Holst put his huge ensemble through many spectacular paces, dramatic and grotesquely humorous alike. A mad, merry dance tune repeatedly threatens to careen out of control. The timpani and low brass cavort like spellbound elephants. A final incantation leads to a hushed, unsettled close.

The suite concludes with the diaphanous, disembodied meditations of *Neptune, the Mystic.* Set once again in the unsettling realm of five beats to the bar, the music arrives as if having traveled across vast distances of outer and inner space. Mid-way through, the ethereal sound of a wordless female chorus floats in from offstage. In the final bars, the orchestra falls silent and the voices echo, over and over, until they fade into silent infinity.

PROGRAM NOTES BY DON ANDERSON © 2024



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As the state's only health sciences university, UAMS is creating a better state of health for you.



Sissy's Log Cabin