

MOZART'S JUPITER AND THE PLANETS



2012 SEASON

Friday 1 June at 8pm
Costa Hall, Deakin University, Geelong


Alexander Shelley conductor
Melbourne Symphony Orchestra Chorus
Jonathan Grieves-Smith chorus master

Mozart
Symphony No.41 *Jupiter*

INTERVAL

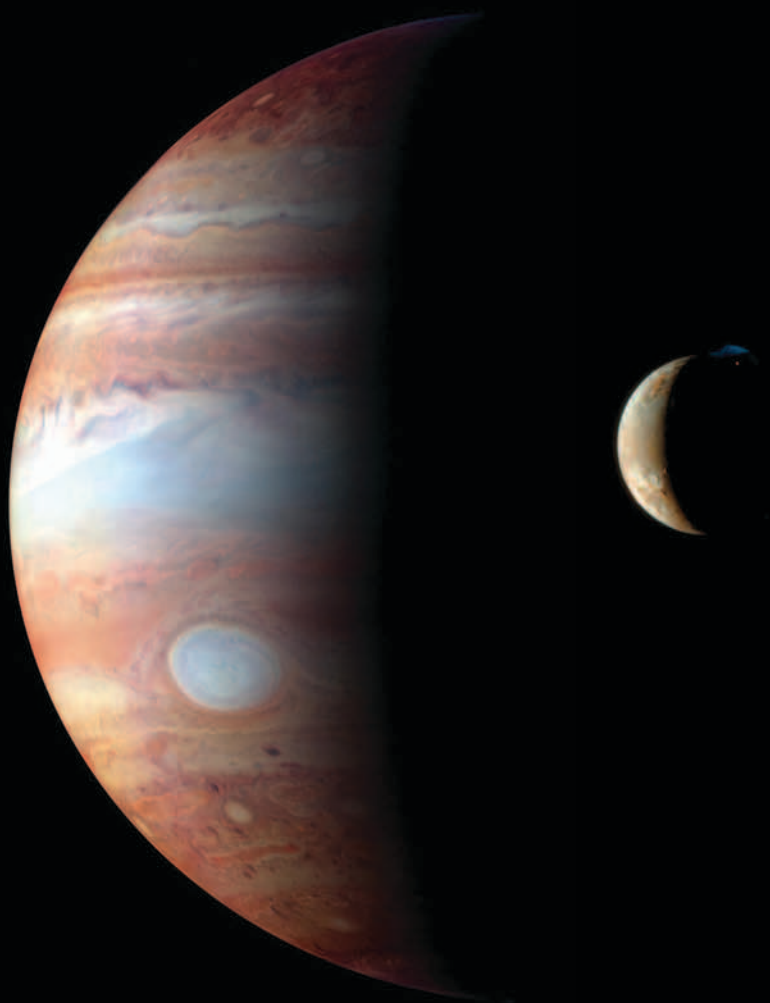
Holst
The Planets

MSO Principal Trombone Brett Kelly
will give the pre-concert talk at 7pm

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WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

(1756–1791)

Symphony No.41 in C, K.551
Jupiter

- I *Allegro vivace*
- II *Andante cantabile*
- III *Menuetto e Trio (Allegretto)*
- IV *Molto allegro*

The concept of a ‘masterpiece’ deserving to be played over and over again with a permanent place in the concert repertoire developed at the end of the 18th century, with the growth of a paying music public and orchestras devoted to public concert-giving. It is no accident that this was the time when pieces began to acquire nicknames – the late symphonies of Joseph Haydn are the best example: *Surprise*, *Miracle*, *Military* and so on. Musicians often complain that the titles are misleading, and, more seriously, that lack of a title has prevented many a fine work from becoming well-known.

Only rarely was the title given by the composer. On the autograph of this, his last symphony, Mozart wrote only ‘Sinfonia’. According to musicologist and Mozart expert Neal Zaslaw, the title *Jupiter* probably originated in London, where it may have been coined by Haydn’s London sponsor,

the violinist and entrepreneur Salomon.

The title *Jupiter* has a neoclassical ring. Images of stately architecture and godly nobility are conjured up by the grand opening of the symphony, but it is doubtful whether Mozart had any extra-musical ideas in mind. The rich orchestral exposition of the first movement concludes with a quotation from a comic aria Mozart had composed for an *opera buffa*. The Classical Viennese symphony establishes a balance between serious and comic elements and makes no barrier between them; this same theme becomes the basis of the powerful development section.

In the slow movement expressive figures for the strings are punctuated by strong chords, and a disturbing undercurrent of emotion is maintained by syncopations and repeated figures. Leading notes emphasise the chromaticism of the music with its constantly shifting harmonic colours, a feature so Mozartian that it is immediately recognisable when Haydn, in the symphony he was writing when he heard of Mozart’s death (No.98), quotes from this movement.

The *Menuetto* is this symphony’s most subtle movement, the one whose achievement may slip past the listener’s attention because it is dressed in the most conventional

COVER PHOTO

Jupiter and Io – © Duncan Copp & NASA JPL

CONCERT INFORMATION



This concert has a duration of approximately two hours, including an interval of 20 minutes.

Monday evening’s performance of this program, in Melbourne, will be recorded for later broadcast around Australia on ABC Classic FM (on analogue and digital radio), and for streaming on its website.

Please turn off your mobile phone and all other electronic devices before the performance commences.

If you do not need your printed program after the concert, we encourage you to return it to the program stands located in the foyer.

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18th-century garb. But who else wrote any minuet like this, with its subtly scored beginning wrapped in waving string figures, its chromaticism, and its brief but powerful reminders of the majesty of the whole symphony? The *Trio* seems more continuous with the minuet than usual, though its beginning arrests the ear, causing us to wonder what will follow. Many have found in this *Trio* more than an outline of the theme of the great last movement.

In 19th-century Germany the *Jupiter* was known as ‘the symphony with the fugal finale’. Learned commentators have pointed out that it is not in fact a fugue, but a sonata-form movement with *fugato* episodes. The thematic basis of this movement is a four-note tag used by many composers: Haydn, Mozart himself, and others from Palestrina through Bach to Brahms. The coda of the movement, where five motives are combined in inverted counterpoint, is not an effect inviting analysis, but sweeps the listener away through its exciting power. Mozart remains an entertainer even at his most serious.

Abridged from a note by David Garrett © 2001

The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra first performed Mozart's Symphony No.41 on 27 June 1940 at a Celebrity Orchestral concert conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. Tadaaki Otaka conducted the most recent performance, on 16 February 2011 at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl.

INTERVAL



GUSTAV HOLST

(1874–1934)

The Planets – Suite for Large Orchestra, Op.32

***Mars, the Bringer of War
Venus, the Bringer of Peace
Mercury, the Winged Messenger
Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity
Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age
Uranus, the Magician
Neptune, the Mystic***

***Women of the Melbourne
Symphony Orchestra Chorus***

It was not in Holst's character to crave success. His major interest was in creating something new with every work, and fame only made that more difficult for him. As his daughter Imogen recalled in 1974: ‘He thought that the few years when he was successful were a waste of time.’

The ‘few years’ were those following the first public performance of *The Planets* in November 1920. He became famous almost overnight and, since the idea of exploiting the work's success filled him with horror, it may be surmised that he was not equipped for celebrity status. As he told a friend: ‘If nobody liked your work...you're in no danger of letting the public make you repeat yourself.’

Holst reached this reluctant fame as a composer from a very practical musical background. Neuritis made him switch as a young man from his chosen instrument of

piano to trombone, on which he became a professional, supporting his composing by playing in bands, concert orchestras and in the opera pit. Thus his earlier academic training, at the Royal College of Music, was supplemented by this substantial practical experience of instrumentation and compositional technique.

At the same time his musical interests were expanding from his early love of Wagner to the composers of the first British musical renaissance, particularly Byrd, Morley, Weelkes and Purcell. With his friend Vaughan Williams, Holst became an enthusiast for and collector of British folk songs. He also gave up the trombone to become a full-time music teacher. These changes to his life are reflected in his music: the folk-imbued orchestral work *A Somerset Rhapsody* and his choral ballet *The Morning of the Year*; the many part-songs inspired by the English madrigal composers; and the works that capture the values he promoted as a teacher, including the *St. Paul's* and *Brook Green* suites for strings, both written for his pupils at St. Paul's Girls School.

His interests outside music also carried important musical implications for him. His reading of Hindu literature and philosophy in translation led him to compose the remarkable chamber opera *Savitri* (1908). Learning Sanskrit allowed him to translate the texts he used in his four sets of *Hymns from the Rig Veda* (1908–12); and his fondness of the Falstaff character gave him the impetus for his opera *At the Boar's Head* (1924).

So it was with his interest in the planets of our solar system. In a letter of 1913 he wrote: ‘As a rule I only study things that suggest music to me. That's why I worried at Sanskrit. Then recently the character of each planet suggested lots to me, and I have been studying astrology fairly closely. It's a pity we make such a fuss about these things. On one side there's nothing but abuse and ridicule, with the natural result that when one is brought face to face

with overwhelming proofs there is a danger of going to the other extreme. Whereas, of course, everything in the world – writing a letter, for instance – is just one big miracle itself. Or rather, the universe itself is one.’ Long after the music of *The Planets* had been completed, Holst was casting his friends’ horoscopes.

Although he began composing *The Planets* in 1914, his teaching commitments allowed him only sporadic work on the piece, and he did not finish all seven movements until 1916. (Incidentally, the work is not a complete journey through the solar system: Earth is omitted, and American astronomer Clyde Tombaugh did not discover Pluto until 1930.) His friend and musical patron Balfour Gardiner gave Holst the present of a private orchestral performance in 1918, conducted by Adrian Boult. Holst was delighted and astonished: he had been convinced that a performance of so complex a work for so large an orchestra would be impossible in war-time conditions.

The Planets in its complete form was not played publicly for another two years. The swiftness of its success at that point may be judged by the circumstances of its United States debut. An intense dispute arose between the orchestras of New York and Chicago for the country’s first

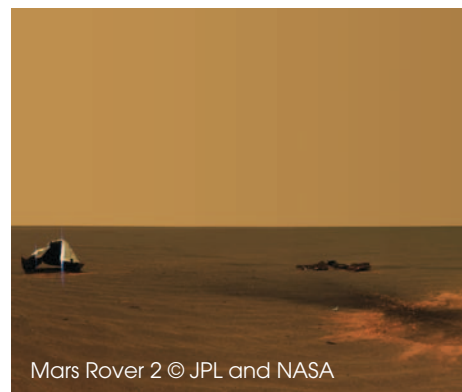
performance, resolved only when both organisations agreed to perform the piece on the same evening (New York coming in by a nose because of the time difference).

The boldness of Holst’s invention and the brilliance of his picture-painting have ensured the work’s enduring popularity, as has its frequent appearance (or plagiarism) in documentaries and movies.

The Planets’ importance also lies in the image it gives us of the musical idioms in the ‘British ether’ during the 20th century’s second decade; Stravinsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Debussy, Sibelius, Wagner and Elgar all make guest appearances in the piece, yet, as musicologist Gerald Abraham put it, ‘each is dissolved in the alembic of Holst’s creative imagination.’

The Planets also points towards a British musical language in which the folk-song tradition plays a small part in a more ambitious, cosmopolitan endeavour. This is why many critics regard Benjamin Britten as Holst’s natural successor.

The Planets is scored for a large orchestra that includes six horns, two tubas, six timpani (requiring two players), two harps, celeste, organ and a generous percussion complement including xylophone. In the final movement only, Holst calls for a six-part chorus of female voices.



Mars Rover 2 © JPL and NASA

Mars, the Bringer of War

The pounding 5/4 rhythms of *Mars* have been used in countless films and documentaries to depict the horror of the Great War, yet this movement – the first Holst wrote – was completed in short score just before war broke out. It begins with a menacing theme emerging over a tread of timpani, strings (using the wood of the bow) and harp rising in crescendo to a powerful statement before the central episode introduces fanfares suggesting, or mocking, military glory. The concluding section brings the two main ideas together in a ferocious collision which results in chaos and oblivion.



MSO EDUCATION WEEK

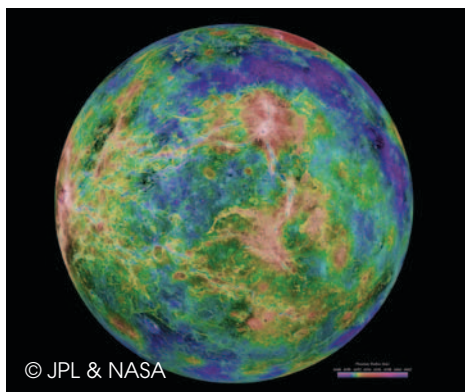
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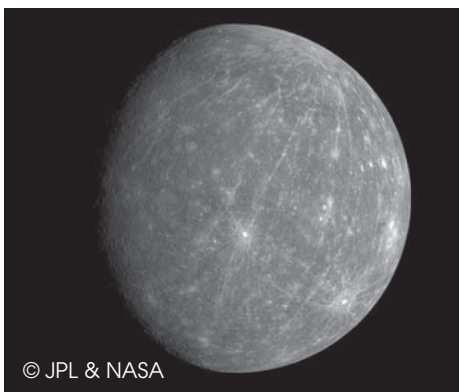
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We hope to see you there!



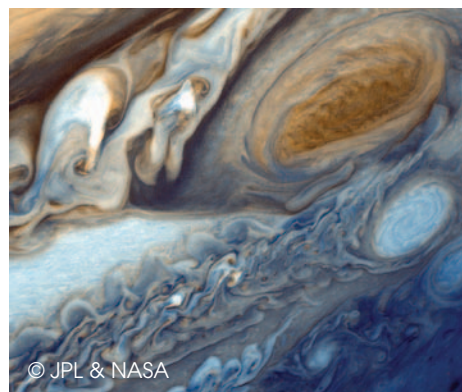
Venus, the Bringer of Peace

Venus is a picture of beauty and serenity, and perhaps the movement most influenced by the music of Debussy and Ravel in its shimmering textures. The horns, woodwinds and harps dominate much of the piece and establish its atmosphere, Holst delaying the entry of the upper strings to magical effect.



Mercury, the Winged Messenger

Here the main theme darts from section to section in appropriately mercurial fashion, until the violin announces a delicate variant of it in the sinuous manner of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sheherazade*. But this newly fashioned theme does not stay long in one place either, and is passed in turn to oboe, flute and celeste before the full orchestra takes it up at the climax. The movement does not so much conclude as dart away.



Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity

Jupiter's dazzling syncopated opening could well be the theme for a TV news program. A kind of rotund jollity soon descends upon the movement, before a sudden change to 3/4 brings in its wake one of Holst's noblest melodies, known in its own right as the patriotic hymn *I vow to thee my country*. *Jupiter* has long been *The Planets'* most popular movement.



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Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age

This was Holst's favourite movement. The quiet tolling of two chords on flutes and harp, suspended over fragmentary double bass phrases, brilliantly suggests both the vastness of space and a process of gradual decay. Gradually, the atmosphere becomes ceremonial, in the manner of a processional, until there is an outburst of anger, replete with clashes of bells and brass. The retreat from this climax involves a return to the opening's quietude, but this time with a greater warmth, perhaps even an acceptance of the condition suggested by the movement's title. In *Saturn* and the final movement, *Neptune*, we hear the music that was to have the greatest bearing on Holst's future development as a composer.

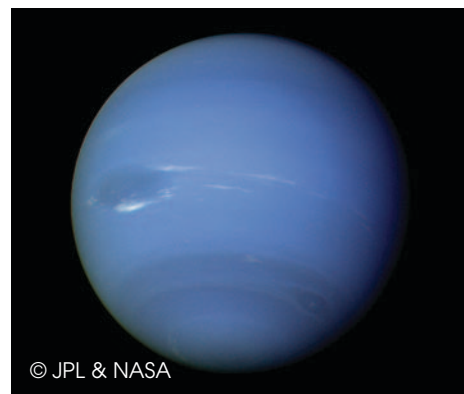


Uranus, the Magician

Dukas' *Sorcerer's Apprentice* is the seed only of this rollicking essay in orchestral colour. The coldly impressive four-note motive heard at the outset gives way to a swaggeringly colourful essay in 6/4 time, with plenty of percussive activity. The magician's temperament gradually becomes quite demonic, before a mad organ glissando ushers in a surprisingly quiet ending.

Neptune, the Mystic

Holst's determination to think for himself is the reason *The Planets* came into existence at all, but this movement is perhaps the most daring and original of all. In *Neptune* we seem to have been cut off from the human qualities and ambitions – even the grotesque ones – with which Holst has characterised the other planets, and are adrift in a place of stars



and ice. Technically speaking this is a study in sonority, where nothing rises above *pianissimo* and where what seems like the suggestion of melodic movement is really no more than the swinging of a musical pendulum. The most substantial thing to grab onto in this void is a pattern of four rising notes intoned by female voices as an ethereal chant, until the whole diaphanous apparition gradually drifts away.

Phillip Sametz © 1999/2008

The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra first performed The Planets on 3 August 1955 with conductor Walter Susskind and the Ladies of the Oriana Madrigal Choir, and most recently in April 2008, when the Orchestra and the Women of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra Chorus were conducted by Richard Hickox.

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ALEXANDER SHELLEY

conductor

A regular visitor to Australia and New Zealand, Alexander Shelley recently extended his current tenure as Principal Conductor of the Nuremberg Symphony Orchestra until 2017.

Since his win at the 2005 Leeds Conductors Competition, he has worked with many of the major orchestras in the UK, Germany and Scandinavia, with recent and forthcoming debuts including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Komische Oper Berlin, Berlin Konzerthaus Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic, Malaysian Philharmonic, Sapporo Symphony, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, Gothenburg Symphony, Zurich Chamber Orchestra, Orchestre National de Montpellier, and the Houston, North Carolina and Pacific Symphony orchestras in the US.

He made his professional opera debut in *The Merry Widow* for Royal Danish Opera in 2008, and returned in 2011 for a new production of Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet*. Forthcoming opera plans include *La bohème* for Opera Lyra at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa and a new production of *The Marriage of Figaro* for Opera North in 2013.

He has an ongoing relationship with the German Chamber Philharmonic Bremen, and is Artistic Director of their groundbreaking Zukunftslabor project, which engages young audiences through innovative programming concepts. In 2001 he founded the Schumann Camerata with whom he presents '440Hz', a series of concerts involving prominent German television, stage and musical personalities, which Shelley conceived as an initiative to attract young adults to the concert hall.

The son of professional musicians, Alexander Shelley studied cello at the Royal College of Music in London and at the Robert Schumann Hochschule, Düsseldorf, and conducting with Thomas Gabisch.



MELBOURNE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA CHORUS

Jonathan Grieves-Smith Chorus Master

Under the artistic leadership of Jonathan Grieves-Smith, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra Chorus is establishing an international reputation for its outstanding performances and recordings. Known as the Melbourne Chorale until 2008, it has since then been integrated with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

The Chorus sings with the finest conductors, including Sir Andrew Davis, Mark Wigglesworth, Bernard Labadie, Stephen Layton, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Masaaki Suzuki and Manfred Honeck. Recent highlights include Britten's *War Requiem*, Kancheli's *Styx*, Haydn's *The Creation*, Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*, Rachmaninov's *The Bells* and Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*.

The Chorus is committed to developing and performing new Australian and international choral repertoire. Recent commissions include Brett Dean's *Katz und Spatz* (commissioned with the Swedish Radio Choir), Ross Edwards' *Mountain Chant* (commissioned with Cantillation), Paul Stanhope's *Exile Lamentations* (commissioned with Sydney Chamber Choir and London's Elysian Singers), and Gabriel Jackson's *To the Field of Stars* (commissioned with the Netherlands Chamber Choir and Stockholm's St Jacob's Chamber Choir). The Chorus has also premiered works by MacMillan, Pärt, Henze, Schnittke, Bryars, Silvestrov, Maskats, Machuel and Vasks, and more.

The Chorus has performed in Brazil, and in Kuala Lumpur with the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, with The Australian Ballet, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, West Australian Symphony Orchestra, with Barbra Streisand, at the Melbourne International Arts Festival, at the 2011 AFL Grand Final and at the Sydney Olympic Arts Festival. The Chorus records for Chandos and MSO Live, and continues its relationship with ABC Classics with the recent release of Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem* with the MSO.



JONATHAN GRIEVES-SMITH

Chorus Master

English conductor and chorus master Jonathan Grieves-Smith has established an international reputation for his compelling performances and breadth of artistic vision. He has been Chorus Master of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra Chorus (formerly Melbourne Chorale) since 1998, and prior to that was Chorus Master of the Huddersfield Choral Society, the Hallé Choir, and Music Director of Brighton Festival Chorus.

An outstanding interpreter of Baroque and Romantic repertoire, Jonathan is a passionate advocate for new music, commissioning and conducting premieres by composers Brett Dean, John Woolrich, Paul Stanhope, Gabriel Jackson, Giya Kancheli, Gavin Bryars, Richard Mills, Alfred Schnittke, Ross Edwards, Krzysztof Penderecki, Arvo Pärt and Peteris Vasks.

Jonathan has trained choirs for performances and recordings with the world's leading conductors including Sir Simon Rattle, Seiji Ozawa, Valery Gergiev, Sir Mark Elder, Sir Andrew Davis, Pierre Boulez, Mark Wigglesworth, James Levine, Lorin Maazel, Yuri Temirkanov and Sir Roger Norrington.

As guest conductor he has worked with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields Chorus, Sydney Chamber Choir, the BBC Singers, Cantillation, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, Dartington International Summer School, the Flemish Federation of Young Choirs, and Europa Cantat.

Conducting highlights include tours of Brazil with the Chorus of Rome's Accademia di Santa Cecilia, with pianist Nelson Freire and the London Mozart Players, and with the Melbourne Chorale (now MSO Chorus). With the Hallé Orchestra and soloists Bryn Terfel and Tasmin Little he conducted Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* and the Elgar Violin Concerto; and with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, he conducted Mendelssohn's Symphony No.2 *Lobgesang* at the Brighton Festival.

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