

My dream timeline:

10:00 - 10:45	Music as a Mirror of History Professor Robert Greenberg, San Francisco Performances Gustav Holst: "Ode to Death"
10:45 - 10:55	BREAK
10:55 - 11:55	Holst's "The Planets" Introduced by Solveig Holmquist
11:55 - 12:00	Chat, if time. I will happily stay on for questions.

This is a pipe dream, since we know that there are announcements and a certain amount of kerfuffle getting started. My main focus is to allow the entire performance of "The Planets" to be heard, since it always galled Holst to have the piece broken up. He thought of it as an entirety, and though several movements are extremely well known, they all deserve to be heard in the order he intended.

I'll send you the U-Tube reference in a separate email, since I forgot to look it up before sending this. The one I like best takes 55 minutes.

Below you'll find a listening guide that I'd like sent out to the membership so they can download it to refer to while listening. Yes, I could have that on the screen during the performance, but I love watching the orchestra play rather than just staring at print. I'm sorry to give you the listening guide in an email, but something's changed with Microsoft Word (or more likely, I've screwed something up), and I can't format anything. I totally lack the technical knowledge to put it right, and I really want you to get this right away in case you have questions or issues. So you'll find it below. I recommend sending it out early next week and again on the 6th or the 7th. Thanks for your help and patience.

LISTENING GUIDE TO "THE PLANETS", by Gustav Holst

Holst began work on "The Planets" in 1914, partly as a result of his interest in astrology. It was given its first performance to the general public at a concert in London in 1919, conducted by Sir Adrian Boult. Holst, who was in Salonica, sent him a long letter full of suggestions, but failed to convince him that the suite should be played in full. The conductor believed that about half an hour of such radically new music was all the public could absorb at first hearing, and he gave only five of the seven movements on that occasion.

Each planet is represented with a different character; one analyst observed that "no planet borrows color from another."

In **MARS**, a persistent, uneven rhythmic cell consisting of five beats, combined with trumpet calls and harmonic dissonance provides battle music which is unique in its expression of violence and sheer terror, Holst's intention being to portray the reality of warfare rather than to glorify deeds of heroism.

In **VENUS**, Holst incorporated from an abandoned vocal work, "A Vigil of Pentecost" to provide the opening; the prevalent mood within the movement is of peaceful resignation and nostalgia.

MERCURY is dominated by uneven meters and rapid changes of theme, to represent the speedy flight of the winged messenger.

JUPITER is renowned for its central melody, "Thaxted", which a critic saw as a "fantastic relaxation in which many retain a far from sneaking delight." That critic and many others criticized the later use of the tune in the patriotic hymn "I Vow to Thee, My Country" -- despite Holst's full complicity.

For **SATURN**, Holst again used a previously used vocal piece "Dirge and Hymeneal", as the basis for the movement, where repeated chords represent the relentless approach of old age.

URANUS, which follows, has elements of Berlioz's "Symphonie fantastique" and Dukas's "The Sorcerer's Apprentice", in its depiction of the magician who "disappears in a whiff of smoke as the sonic impetus of the movement diminishes from fff to ppp in the space of a few bars.

NEPTUNE, the final movement, concludes with a wordless female chorus gradually receding, an effect which has been compared to unresolved timelessness...never ending, since space does not end, but drifting away into eternal silence.

Apart from his concession with "I Vow To Thee..", Holst insisted on the unity of the whole work. and opposed the performance of individual movements. Sadly, his wife Imogen later wrote that the piece had "suffered from being quoted in snippets as background music."

THIS MATERIAL GLEANED FROM SEVERAL HOLST BIOGRAPHIES