

## MOTION & MOOD PICTURES

MAY 4, 2019

**Darko Butorac**, Conductor  
**William Hagen**, violin

**Bernard Herrmann**  
(1911-1975)

**Vertigo Suite**  
Prelude  
Nightmare  
Scene d'Amour

**Erich Korngold**  
(1897-1957)

**Concerto for Violin in D major, Op. 35**  
Moderato nobile  
Romanze  
Allegro assai vivace

INTERMISSION

**Gustav Holst**  
(1874-1934)

**The Planets, 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

Growing up in New York City gave **Bernard Herrmann (1911-75)** the advantage of attending many concerts before he began official studies in composition at New York University and subsequently at Juilliard. He started his own chamber ensemble when he was only twenty and also conducted at CBS for many years, wielding the baton for premieres of lesser-known (at the time) classical composers such as Charles Ives. Herrmann collaborated with Orson Welles, composing for *Mercury Theatre* and conducting the orchestra for Welles' famous 30 October 1938 adaptation of *The War of the Worlds*. In addition to radio, the composer wrote for TV programs such as *The Twilight Zone*, and he partnered numerous times with Alfred Hitchcock: *Psycho*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, and *Vertigo*. However, he and Hitchcock disagreed about the music for *Torn Curtain*; the director thought the composer was too old-fashioned and needed to embrace jazz- and popular idioms. Herrmann refused, and his original music for *Torn Curtain* was not heard until after he died. Although he also wrote for the concert stage—an opera, *Wuthering Heights*, and a cantata, *Moby Dick*, among others—today Herrmann is best known as a writer of film soundtracks. Non-Hitchcock films include *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951) and *Citizen Kane* (1941). The latter earned an Academy Award nomination for Best Score of a Dramatic Picture, but it was the 1941 film *The Devil and Daniel Webster* that gave Herrmann his only Oscar.

Distinctive style traits in Herrmann's music include repetitive melodic phrases, ostinatos (short harmonic or rhythmic patterns that are repeated over and over) and unconventional instrumentation. Twelve harps create a watery atmosphere in *Beneath the 12 Mile Reef*, and four alto flutes contribute to the eerie beginning of *Citizen Kane*. *Psycho* was the first movie scored for only strings. In September 2005, the

American Film Institute's One Hundred Years of Film Scores counted down the top twenty-five greatest scores. *Vertigo* was named # 12 and *Pyscho* #4. Seven other Herrmann soundtracks were also nominated. Herrmann's influence is evident in the music of many of today's film composers; Danny Elfman (several *Batman* movies, two *Men in Black* films, *Good Will Hunting*, and *Mission Impossible*) acknowledged that his career choice was due in part to the impact of Herrmann's score for *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. A 1996 Sony Classical recording of Herrmann's music, *The Film Scores*, with Esa-Pekka Salonen conducting the Los Angeles Philharmonic, was re-released in 2004 as part of its "Great Performances" series (SNYC 92767SK).

**Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957)** was born in Moravia in an area that is now part of the Czech Republic. How appropriately he was named! A child prodigy, he was only nine when he played for Mahler, who declared him "a genius." His Piano Sonata No. 2, written at age 13, was premiered in 1911 by Artur Schnabel, who subsequently performed it throughout Europe. And the renowned Bruno Walter conducted his two one-act operas when Korngold was just nineteen. At age 24, the composer himself conducted at the Hamburg Opera. He subsequently taught for three years at the Vienna Staatsakademie before escaping the growing threat of Hitler's regime by moving to Hollywood in 1934, at the request of director Max Reinhardt. It was not long before the composer won two Oscars—in 1936 for his *Anthony Adverse* soundtrack and in 1938 for *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. The latter score is ranked eleventh on the American Film Institute's 2005 "Top 25 all-time best music for films." Korngold is considered one of the founders of Hollywood film music, and his "classical" compositions often incorporate popular themes from his film scores, something that he had confirmed was explicitly allowed in his contract with Warner Brothers. Korngold stopped writing for American films in 1946-7. Before his stroke in 1956 and death the following year, he concentrated on concert works including a symphony, his third string quartet, a cello concerto, and the violin concerto. He died before he could complete his sixth opera or second symphony.

Dedicated to Mahler's widow Alma, who was a musician in her own right, the **Violin Concerto in D Major** premiered in February 1947 with Jascha Heifetz and the St. Louis Symphony. One month later Heifetz played it in Carnegie Hall with the New York Philharmonic. Korngold's orchestration is not quite as large as Holst's (see below) as there are fewer brass instruments, only one harp, and no organ, but, like the British composer, he includes the celeste (a small keyboard instrument that produces bell-like sounds) as well as an interesting assortment of percussion. The soloist joins the orchestra from the first notes of the **Moderato nobile** in a melody that is wide-ranging not only in pitch but also in mood, creating an intimate portrait that alternates with a lush landscape of epic proportions. The concerto is one of Korngold's works that borrowed themes from his own film music. A dramatic mini cadenza in the middle and a blaze of notes for the violinist at the end are the highlights of the first movement.

Pulsations in the strings provide the backdrop for a sweet, stepwise melody for solo violin in the **Romanze**. An element of disquietude found in the contrasting middle section resolves in the peaceful conclusion of the second movement. **Allegro assai vivace** begins with an energetic jig for the violin, quickly followed by the orchestra's imitation of the jig with the accompaniment of the soloist's plucked, syncopated notes. Does anyone else recognize "I can do anything better that you can" from Irving Berlin's 1946 *Annie Get Your Gun*? The music exhibits the influence of Copland, specifically *Rodeo* (1942) and *Appalachian Spring* (1944). In turn, one can identify the influence of both Copland and Korngold in the film music of John Williams.

The inherent lyricism in the concerto is underscored in the following quote from the composer: “In spite of the demand for **virtuosity** in the finale, the work with its many melodic and lyric episodes was contemplated more for a **Caruso** than for a **Paganini**. It is needless to say how delighted I am to have my concerto performed by Caruso and Paganini in one person: Jascha Heifetz.”

**Gustav Holst (1874-1934)** studied at the Royal College of Music in London, where he met Ralph Vaughn Williams, a fellow composer with whom he remained friends for four decades. Problems with neuritis affected Holst throughout most of his life and prohibited a career playing violin or piano, which he studied when young; however, the trombone required less agile fingers, and he was a professional brass player for about five years before he became a teacher. Holst taught in Great Britain from 1905 until his death, so he had little time to compose except on weekends. Later in life he also lectured in America at institutions such as the University of Michigan and Harvard. As it did in the music of his countrymen Vaughan Williams and Edward Elgar, nineteenth-century Romanticism persisted in Holst’s style despite the modernistic tendencies of many composers of his era. At the time that Holst was composing *The Planets* (1914-16), other composers were experimenting with atonality and extensive dissonance (Schoenberg’s 1912 *Pierrot Lunaire*) and polytonality and primitivistic rhythms (Stravinsky’s 1913 *The Rite of Spring*). Such “modern” elements were incorporated only sparingly into Holst’s writings. *The Planets* became one of his most popular works. It is technically a cycle of seven tone poems that can be performed individually or as a set. Holst’s collection does not include “mood pictures” of Earth or Pluto; perhaps he thought there was no mystery to the former, and the latter had not yet been discovered. (Scientists cannot seem to definitively decide whether or not the little orb is a planet anyway; it was demoted to “dwarf planet” in 2006, although there is one scientific contingent that argues for its planetary reinstatement.) Holst’s score requires a large orchestra: pairs of piccolos, flutes, and oboes, a bass oboe and English horn, three clarinets and bass clarinet, three bassoons and contrabassoon, six horns, four trumpets, two trombones and a bass trombone, tenor tuba (euphonium) and bass tuba, six timpani and additional percussion, celeste, two harps, organ, strings, and a female chorus. This vast assemblage of resources allows for copious color palettes, from the loud “war-like” declarations of Mars to the ethereal meditations of Neptune.

Bassoons, contrabassoon, and two horns introduce “**Mars, the Bringer of War**” with a low, ominous theme. Wooden sticks (instead of felt) beat a rhythmic ostinato on the timpani, and strings play *col legno* (“with the wood” of the back of the bow). Brass and percussion dominate the martial scene, and occasional dissonances combined with the asymmetry of five beats to a measure suggest combat. An unusual solo for euphonium is highlighted by a leaner orchestral accompaniment. Anxious pauses between irregular groupings of accented chords create a terrifying ending to Holst’s rendition of war. If some sections remind you of *Star Wars*, it is because Holst is one of many classical influences on John Williams’ film music.

“**Venus, The Bringer of Peace**” repeats an ascending horn motif and features shimmering flutes, harps, and strings. A violin solo and cameos for individual woodwind instruments help provide a serene contrast to the previous military poem.

“**Mercury, The Winged Messenger**” derives its sense of aerial motion from rapid passages of *con sordino* (muted) notes, frequently played in a continuous ascending pattern. The celeste further suggests a heavenly (celestial) setting while changes in meter contribute to the “mercurial” sense of the “winged messenger.”

*Allegro giocoso* (fast, cheerful) is the tempo indication for “**Jupiter, The Bringer of Jollity.**” Horns are entrusted first with a tricky syncopated theme and later with another of narrative character. A gloriously noble middle section brings to mind “Nimrod,” the majestic central section of Elgar’s “Enigma Variations” (TSO, March 2018).

Two chords alternating with clock-like regularity along with a foreboding passage in the string basses set the scene for a ponderous low brass theme. The timpanist adds to the metric alternation of notes. Time moves forward inexorably and, at times, frighteningly in “**Saturn, The Bringer of Old Age.**” Momentary discord resolves in peacefulness.

An angular, declamatory motto with timpani punctuation announces “**Uranus, The Magician.**” Chortling bassoons paint a caricature. The motto sneaks in numerous appearances with various rhythmic disguises, and Uranus seems like a scary place. After many dramatic contrasts and a full-blown parody of a military march, it ends abruptly.

*Pianissimo* groups of three beats alternating with groups of two beats create an “off-kilter” and mysterious atmosphere in “**Neptune, The Mystic.**” Harp tremolos and celeste arpeggios contribute to the sense of other-worldliness, which is heightened when a six-part chorus wordlessly starts vocalizing off-stage. And then the work recedes into the galaxy far, far away.

Holst, an amateur astrologist, prepared these somewhat obtuse notes for the 1920 premiere: “These pieces were suggested by the astrological significance of the planets; there is no programme music, neither have they any connection with the deities of classical mythology bearing the same names. If any guide to the music is required the subtitle to each piece will be found sufficient, especially if it be used in the broad sense. For instance, Jupiter brings jollity in the ordinary sense, and also the more ceremonial type of rejoicing associated with religions or national festivities. Saturn brings not only physical decay, but also a vision of fulfillment. Mercury is the symbol of mind.”

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