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Concert: Ithaca College Symphony Orchestra

Octavio Mas-Arocas

Keehun Nam

Ithaca College Symphony Orchestra

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Recommended Citation

Mas-Arocas, Octavio; Nam, Keehun; and Ithaca College Symphony Orchestra, "Concert: Ithaca College Symphony Orchestra" (2018). *All Concert & Recital Programs*. 3687.

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Ithaca College Symphony Orchestra

Octavio Más-Arocas, director
Keehun Nam, assistant conductor

Monday, April 30th, 2018
8:15 pm



ITHACA COLLEGE

School of Music

Concert Program

Atmospheres - Fanfare

Jake O'Connor
(b. 1997)

World Premiere, IC Orchestras Fanfare Project

Nightscares

T.J. Cole
(b. 1993)

Keehun Nam, conductor

The Planets, op. 32

Gustav Holst
(1874-1934)

1. Mars, the Bringer of War
2. Venus, the Bringer of Peace
3. Mercury, the Winged Messenger
4. Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity
5. Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age
6. Uranus, the Magician
7. Neptune, the Mystic

Program Notes

T.J. Cole: Nightscapes

Program notes by the composer

"Nightscape" was a response to an experience I had after stargazing one summer in northern Michigan. Visually, I reflected on how objects in the sky gradually revealed themselves, while the entirety of the scene shifted and expanded over time. Emotionally, I was struck by the beauty of the night sky while feeling equally terrified by its vastness. About two-thirds of the way through the piece, I represent a brief moment from my experience: looking past individual objects in the sky and instead seeing the sky in its entirety.

Gustav Holst: The Planets

Program notes by Peter Nagle, edited by Keehun Nam

The origin of *The Planets* lies in a walking holiday in Spain that Holst took with his close friend Clifford Bax in 1913. They discovered a mutual interest in astrology, and their conversations sparked the idea for a large-scale work exploring the personality traits associated with the planets.

Such interests were not unusual. From *Theosophy* to Conan Doyle's *Advocacy of the Existence of Fairies and the Thriving Trade in Necromancy*, the supernatural and paranormal were popular throughout society. The frisson of scandal provided by the likes of the occultist Aleister Crowley added spice to the fashion for spiritualism of all hues. The British Empire, built on the science of the Industrial Revolution, created a ready market for mysticism from the East. This was reflected in the art of the era: Holst's own *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda*, op. 26, were an early success.

Holst's interest in mysticism and astrology was more than a passing fad: he continued to cast horoscopes for his friends throughout his life. His attention in *The Planets* however was focussed less on divination than character. Holst's subtitles for each planet play fairly loose with strict ideas of astrological significance. It was more important to him to convey a sense of the development of human character than to be tied down by dogma. The overall plan combines a sequence of contrasting pairs with a progression from the physical to the spiritual. The movement that upsets this pattern, Mercury, was also the last to be composed, and Holst seems to have had trouble deciding how it should fit in. In a letter to a friend he recalled that "As far as I can remember I had the scheme of *The Planets* roughly worked out in my mind by Easter of 1914 except Mercury which was added later."

At the time he composed the suite, Holst was firmly established in his roles as director of music at St. Paul's Girls' School in Hammersmith and at Morley College in Waterloo, two posts he retained for the rest of his working life. This settled life was disturbed when war broke out in September of 1914. Holst rushed to enlist, but was rejected because of poor eyesight. He was eventually offered a job at the YMCA in Salonica as part of their educational work with the troops. Before he left, Balfour Gardiner, who had championed many of his earlier works (and the great-uncle of Elliott Gardiner, a renowned composer still working today), gave him a generous parting gift: a private performance of *The Planets* by the Queen's Hall Orchestra, conducted by Adrian Boult. Holst enlisted his pupils into the wordless chorus of "Neptune", as well as copyists to produce the orchestral parts. The work was performed at the Queen's Hall in September of 1918. Boult conducted partial performances in 1919, omitting Venus and Neptune, but it was not until November 1920 that the complete work was "officially" heard in public for the first time. By then, Holst's *Hymn of Jesus*, composed immediately after *The Planets*, had been premiered to great acclaim, and the orchestral work's official debut had become an event to remember. Reviews of the early outings of the movements had been mixed (*The Times* described it as "elaborately contrived and painful to hear") but the reception of the official premiere verged on the fulsome.

Mars is often taken to signify Holst's reaction to the outbreak of war in September of 1914. What is depicted, however, is a psychological conflict. The war-like temperament is one that turns upon itself which is reflected in the theme that continually tries to expand but collapses in on itself all the while being driven by the restless tattoo that underpins virtually the entire movement.

Venus sounds much simpler than Mars, but it is in fact filled with a sophisticated subtlety alien to the Bringer of War. Elements of the opening movement are here transformed from negative, unresolved tension into ethereal beauty. In this light, Mercury may be seen as a transformation of Mars, showing how its characteristics may lead to positive and inventive behaviour when tempered by Venusian serenity. This playful and fleet-footed movement may contain an element of self-portrait: Holst's own star sign was Virgo ruled by Mercury.

Of all the movements, Jupiter has perhaps suffered the most from its popularity. The unfortunate appropriation of its central melody as a patriotic hymn has brought associations of solemnity and piety that really have nothing to do with its true character. It is certainly exhilarating, but partial performances of the suite that use it as a finale miss the point: its energy is of the physical world and therefore transient (Holst's use of the term "Jollity" rather than "Joy" is significant). This is emphasised by its complement, Saturn. However,

the Bringer of Old Age is not the tragic figure some see it as. The steady tread reflects the inevitability of physical decay, and its conclusion the serenity that follows acceptance of this. Only by accepting the passage of time can one hope to transcend it and enter the metaphysical realm of the final two movements.

The first of these, Uranus, the Magician, would appear to be played as comedy. The term "Magician" has inescapable associations with children's birthday parties, and Uranus comes across as a conjuror rather than the magus we might expect from the portentous opening flourish. Perhaps Holst is poking fun at the pretensions of the occultist movement. The music easily brings to mind a Crowley-like figure grandiosely casting spells. The comedy falls away at the climax, as something altogether more dark and powerful is revealed, and the Magician realises he is dabbling with something rather serious.

Neptune, the Mystic moves into another realm altogether. Its meter and much of its thematic material echo events of Mars, but it is transformed far beyond the concerns of the physical world. The incorporeal aspect is emphasised by an offstage female chorus (for the audience, literally disembodied voices). There is no conclusion of any conventional kind: only the voices, floating into the distance endlessly.

Biographies

Octavio Más-Arocas is a versatile and dynamic conductor whose achievements demonstrate his talent and musicianship. Más-Arocas is currently the Music Director and Conductor of the Mansfield Symphony Orchestra in Ohio, the Director of Orchestras at Ithaca College in New York, Conductor-in-Residence at the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, and conductor of the Interlochen Philharmonic at the Interlochen Arts Camp.

An award-winning conductor, Mr. Más-Arocas won the Robert J. Harth Conducting Prize at the Aspen Music Festival; the Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy Award, given by Kurt Masur; the Thelma A. Robinson Award from the Conductors Guild; a prize from the Third European Conductors Competition; and the National Youth Orchestra of Spain Conductors Competition. In 2012, Mr. Más-Arocas was selected by the League of American Orchestras to conduct the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra in a showcase event during the League's National Conference in Dallas.

Chosen by Kurt Masur, Mr. Más-Arocas was awarded the prestigious Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy Scholarship. Consequently, he worked as Maestro Masur's assistant with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and the Helsinki Radio Orchestra and made his German conducting

debut with the Leipziger Symphonieorchester. The offer came after Mr. Más-Arocas' New York debut concert sharing the podium with Maestro Masur and the Manhattan School of Music Symphony.

Mr. Más-Arocas served as Principal Conductor of the Green Bay Symphony Orchestra, Wisconsin and held the positions of Director of Orchestral Studies and Opera Conductor at the Lawrence University Conservatory of Music in Wisconsin, Director of Orchestral Studies and Associate Professor of Conducting at the Baldwin Wallace University Conservatory of Music in Ohio, Director of Orchestras at the Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan, Resident Conductor of the Sewanee Summer Music Festival in Tennessee, and Assistant conductor of the National Repertory Orchestra in Colorado. Simultaneous to his work with the Lawrence Symphony Orchestra, Mr. Más-Arocas was the Resident Conductor of the Unicamp Symphony Orchestra in Campinas, Brazil where he also was a Visiting Professor of Conducting at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas in 2013. Mr. Más-Arocas spends part of his summers and winters near Grand Traverse, MI where he has developed a relationship as guest conductor of the Traverse City Orchestra and continues his association as guest conductor at the Interlochen Center for the Arts. In addition, he has worked with the Alabama Symphony Orchestra as a regular cover conductor.

In the last few years Mr. Más-Arocas has conducted orchestras across North and South America and Europe including the Filarmonica George Enescu in Romania, the Granada City Orchestra in Spain, the Leipziger Symphonieorchester in Germany, the Orquestra Sinfônica da Unicamp in Brazil, the Green Bay, Traverse City, Fort Worth, Spokane, Toledo, Phoenix, Memphis, Kansas City, and San Antonio Symphonies, the National Repertory Orchestra, the Manhattan School of Music Symphony, the orchestras of Viana do Castelo and Artave in Portugal, the Interlochen Philharmonic, the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico Philharmonic, the Rosario Symphony in Argentina, Kharkov Symphony in Ukraine, the National Youth Orchestras of Portugal and Spain, the Pescara Symphony in Italy, the Amsterdam Brass in the Netherlands, and the Ciudad Alcala de Henares Symphony. In addition, Mr. Más-Arocas has served as assistant conductor at the Madrid Royal Opera House.

Mr. Más-Arocas was assistant conductor of the National Repertory Orchestra, which he conducted in subscription, family, and pops concerts. As the Resident Conductor at the Sewanee Summer Music Festival he conducted the Festival, Symphony, and Cumberland Orchestras. Other festival appearances include the Aspen Music Festival, the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, the Festival Internacional Carlos Gomes in Campinas, Brazil, the Interlochen Music Festival, the Bach Festival at Baldwin Wallace University, and the MidAmerican Center for Contemporary Music.

His ability to work, inspire, and transform young talents has led him to be a frequent guest conductor with prominent music education organizations and ensembles around the world. He has worked with the World Youth Symphony Orchestra, the national youth orchestras of Portugal and Spain, has conducted All-State Honor Orchestras, and has been in residence with university orchestras in Chicago, Portugal, and Brazil. Mr. Más-Arocas has led tours with the National Youth Orchestra "Templarios" of Portugal, the Interlochen Symphony, the Baldwin Wallace Symphony, and toured Argentina with the Silleda Wind Symphony.

Mr. Más-Arocas is an alumnus of the prestigious American Academy of Conducting at Aspen where he studied with David Zinman. He completed doctoral studies, and his main mentors include Kurt Masur, Harold Farberman, and Emily Freeman Brown.

Keehun Nam serves as the Music Director of the Ithaca College Sinfonietta, Assistant Conductor to Ithaca College Symphony and Chamber Orchestras under the direction of Prof. Octavio Más-Arocas, Orchestra Director to Savoyards Ithaca, guest conductor of Cornell Chamber and Symphony Orchestras, and conductor of the Ithaca College Contemporary Ensemble.

Previously, he was the Music Director of the Vanderbilt Commodore Orchestra, a cornerstone of student culture at Vanderbilt University where he also taught music theory as an adjunct faculty member and mentored undergraduate conducting students. In Nashville, he was the production assistant to Jim Gray, one of the most sought-after arrangers and orchestrators in the country. Under Mr. Gray, he supervised recording sessions, prepared music, and engraved manuscripts. As a passionate advocate of new music, he has given premieres of many new works by composers such as Elliott Schwartz and co-founded Unpitched, an organization focused on bringing together different communities through the cultivation of contemporary music.

Upcoming Events

May 5, 2018 at 4:00pm - Concluding Concert of the Ithaca International Conducting Masterclass

Ludwig van Beethoven: Symphony No. 7
Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 6

Etienne Abelin, Dajoung Choi, Benjamin Firer, Alexander Magalong,
Keehun Nam, Tani Ryan, Duo Shen, Kin Szeto, conductors

Ithaca College Symphony Orchestra

Flute

Jeannette Lewis*
Nicole Murray
Hannah Morris^
Kathleen Barnes

Oboes

Ellen O'Neill*
Morgan Atkins
Stefanie Nicou
Erica Erath^

Clarinets

Erin Dowler*
Emma Grey^
Bryan Filetto
Katherine Filatov

Bassoons

Olivia Fletcher*^
Brittany Giles
Emily Roach

Horns

Jacob Factor*^
Jeremy Straus
Ben Futterman
Sydney Rosen

Trumpet

Kristen
Warnokowski*^
Peter Gehres
Stephen Russell
Elliot Lowe
Kristen Kasky (Asst.)

Trombones

Julie Dombroski*^
William Esterling III
Sean Bessette

Euphonium

Elizabeth Rutan

Tuba

Steven Wilkinson

Timpani

Grace Asuncion*^
Dan Syvret

Percussion

Katie McInerney*^
Ben Brown-McMillin
Dan Monte

Harp

Jessica Wilbee*
Amy Thompson

Celesta

Manuel Gimferrer

Organ

Madeleine Parkes

Violin I

Shelby Dems
Esther Witherell
Alem Ballard
Reuben Foley
Kai Hedin
Henry Scott Smith
Peter Nowak
Emilie Benigno
Bailey Angstadt
Daniel McCaffrey
Lily Mell
Lucia Barrero Oliver
Taylor Payne

Violin II

Kathryn Drake
Gabriella Stout
Emily Scicchitano
Dgybert Jean
Julia Plato
Anna Lugbill
Matthew Barnard
Katelyn Tai
Tyler Bage
Timothy Ryan Parham
Masakazu Yasumoto
Rowan Whitesell
Liam Mazierski
Miranda Crosley

Violas

Michelle Metty
Richard Cruz
Nickolette Cartales
Carter Kohler
Jessica Herman
Zachary Cohen
Karly Masters
Jacob Shur
Alyssa Budzynski
Alora Foster
Simone Cartales
Maria Dupree
Christopher Chen
Molly Crocker
Enaw Elonge
Geoff Devereux

Cello

Craig Mehler
Molly DeLorenzo
Terri Landez
Grace Dashnaw
Malachi Brown
Caroline Andrews
Kelton Burnside
Hannah Weibley
Hideo Schwartz
Mechu Lippert
Wren Murray
David Shane
Charlie Siegenger
Aidan Saltini

Basses

Tom Brody
Matt Suffern
Emani Barber
August Bish
Jonathan Hoe
Sam Higgins
Kiefer Fuller
Adam Siegler
Ryan Petriello
Grace Wible
Zane Carnes

^ Principal for *Nightscapes*

* Principal for *The Planets*