

Isabella Warmack

Professor Pecherek

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The DuPage Symphony Orchestra, directed by Barbara Schubert, plays an “Out-of-This-World” themed concert on October 23rd in spirit of Halloween. Their repertoire consisted of pieces from well known and loved movies such as Star Trek, Star Wars, and E.T. The stars of the concert, however, were certainly Gustav Holst’s memorable compositions from *The Planets*. The concert was one of great excitement.

The first piece that the orchestra played was the main theme from *Star Trek*. It started at a moderate tempo in compound duple meter. After a short brass fanfare, the strings and woodwinds played a lively melody that stayed around mezzo forte for most of the piece. The melody was simple and had soaring effect to it. It gave the piece a sense of movement because the melody kept the composition constantly in motion. Meanwhile, the brass section accented them with piercing notes. They did well in staying behind the melody. The piece ended with a grand repeat of part of the melody with the brass added in. Cymbal crashes accented them. The orchestra ended together on one higher note and four lower ones, giving the piece a sense of finality. It was an excellent piece to start the concert with because it was something most of the audience was familiar with. Furthermore, it wasn’t too hard to follow and the melody was simple and memorable.

Next, the orchestra played excerpts from Gustav Holst’s orchestral suite, *The Planets*. The first played excerpt was “Mars, the Bringer of War.” It was written in an unusual quintuple meter which caused the piece to stand out immediately. The piece began with the French horns and bassoons playing alternating tones which were later played by the woodwinds and trumpets. These tones continued to appear throughout the composition. The string section supported them by using *col legno battuto* to produce an effect that sounded like war drums. This effect set the mood of the composition and reflected Holst’s image of Mars as a warrior. Crescendos and

decrescendos were used throughout the piece which heightened the intensity of the composition. A fervent, gliding melody, introduced by the low brass section was the focus of the piece. The trumpets supported the melody with alternating tones similar to the ones that started the piece. Tension built up until a loud hold was used to end the piece on a note of inconclusiveness. The continuous, urgent nature of the composition depicted how war can sometimes feel endless. Additionally, the unresolved ending reflected the feelings of conflict that war leaves behind. This was one of my favorite pieces of the concert because I could clearly imagine the warrior that Holst was trying to depict.

“Mercury, the Winged Messenger” was the next composition of Holst’s planets that the orchestra played. It started off at a fast and bright tempo, vivace, in a compound duple meter. The strings and woodwinds started with lively runs, eventually hitting a note at sforzando which was further accented by the timpani. Throughout the piece, there was a great variation in the rhythms used. There were runs of six eighth notes per measure that went up and down in pitch. Then there were quarter notes that varied in pitch and slowly worked their way down. Other measures were a blend of eighth notes, quarter notes, and dotted quarter notes. Though each of these rhythms were very different from the others, they blended well together and gave the piece a unique quality. Furthermore, the piece went from a staccato section to a smooth, legato part. The celesta and harp were used throughout the piece which gave it a light, delicate impression. The piece ended after it decrescendoeoed to pianissimo and the orchestra played an eighth note chord together. As in Mars, I could see the picture that Holst painted of a speedy, quick messenger through the variety in rhythms, dynamics, and accents that were used.

Following Mercury, the orchestra played “Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity.” It started at an allegro tempo and simple duple meter. The violins played fast alternating notes, followed by the

horns and cellos which came in with the melody. They were joined by the two timpani players which gave the melody a deep, rich sound. The piece changed in theme a few times throughout the composition. Towards the middle of the piece a smooth, almost hymn-like legato melody was played by the string section. The musicians used vibrato to make the melody even more touching and emotional. The brass section accented this melody with delicate notes played at piano. The melody used crescendos to reach a majestic peak. Near the end of the composition, a previous melody made a comeback with slight variations added. The melody became a little abrupt and the use of a tambourine added an exotic feel. The piece switched to a minor key which turned the smooth, legato melody that was played earlier into a darker, richer version. After a great crescendo, the piece ended on a stab. Overall, the composition reflected how Mercury was described in the title as bringer of cheerful celebration. It was the most dramatic piece in the concert.

“Uranus, the Magician” was the last piece of Holst’s pieces that the orchestra performed. It started with the brass holding notes with fermatas at forte and the timpani were added to accent them. Then the piece went into a lively allegro tempo. The low woodwinds took on an interesting staccato melody which reappeared throughout the piece. They were joined by the rest of the woodwinds, the strings, and lastly the brass section. Throughout the piece there were solos from the French horn, clarinet, and tuba which were supported by syncopated notes played by the flutes, piccolos, harp, and xylophone. The orchestra hit a loud note together and then went to a lento section played at pianissimo. The harp played harmonics which gave the piece an eerie, haunting feeling. The piece ended softly after a few last harp harmonics were played and a final light timpani note was given. The composition vividly reflected Holst’s imagine of Uranus being a magician. At some sections, the composition was lively and staccatos were

played fervently. The piece had a slightly crazed effect to it. On the opposite spectrum, the piece was soft, slow, and haunting. The extremity of the music portrayed Uranus as a magician with a personality that flipped from one extreme to the other. I thought this was the most complex piece that the orchestra played and it was one of my favorite because of its contrasting sections.

Following the four compositions from *The Planets*, the orchestra played “Flying Theme from E.T.” by John Williams. The oboes and flutes started off the piece with runs and staccatos. It instantly painted the picture of flying upward. The violins followed this with a long, gliding melody which sounded like someone soaring through the sky. The flutes continued to play runs which accented the melody. The oboe and flute soon took over the melody, followed by the xylophone which added a lighter feeling to the melody. The brass came in majestically which countered the smooth melody. After a *ritardando*, there was a long pause which created anticipation in the audience. Following that, there was flute solo where the flautist used vibrato to add warmth and intensity to their tone. A harp accompanied the flute by strumming sweeping notes which echoed around the room. The brass section brought the piece back to its majestic melody which was accented by cymbal crashes. The composition ended on one note that brought the piece to a grand conclusion. Overall, the entire piece reflected scenes of flying through the air. The grander parts depicted soaring fast through the sky and the smooth, gliding parts brought images of graceful sailing.

Next, the orchestra played their second *Star Trek* piece entitled “Star Trek Through the Years.” It was Calvin Custer’s arrangement and compilation of themes from six *Star Trek* movies. It started off with the violins holding long notes to support the low brass who had a graceful melody. A piano player played a simple harmony in the background. The piece took a

faster tempo as the violins and woodwinds played on a new melody with the brass accenting them. The second section was slower. The woodwinds and low brass played a graceful melody. The third section was lighter than the others. The strings led the piece and the musicians used vibrato to heighten the emotions of the piece. A piano concluded this section, adding a sense of finality to it. The fourth section of the piece contrasted the previous one: it started with fast, fervent runs by the woodwinds and strings. The brass came in with a majestic theme that sounded similar in nature to the first one. The timpani and snare drum were used to heighten the grandeur that the brass created. The fifth section featured a sweeping melody by the string section. The flutes and oboes embellished it by playing falling notes. The brass section joined in the melody. The last section went back to the familiar melody that the first section had. Drum rolls by the timpani and snare drum led up to a last note which was hit hard with an accent. Each section of the composition, though different from each other, blended well together. Rather than sudden starts and stops to each section, the transitions between the different tempos and dynamics were softened through accelerandos, ritardandos, crescendos, and decrescendos.

The last piece the orchestra played was a medley of pieces from *Star War Episode VII: The Force Awakens*. It started with the main *Star Wars* theme. The brass started the piece off with a small fanfare and then the woodwinds and strings played the melody in a fast march tempo. The piece faded into the next section which featured the oboes and the flutes supported by the harp. The string section then played a sweeping melody while the xylophone accented them. The melody was legato and there were many crescendos and decrescendos used to heighten the intensity of the piece. The third section started at piano with darker notes in the minor key played by the bassoons. The strings played quick alternating notes in the background. The melody came out, first played by the low brass and woodwinds. The string section and

trumpets soon picked up the melody as it crescendoed to forte. Meanwhile, the timpani kept the beat of the piece and the cymbals accented the notes. The next section started with a long brass note. This part of the composition was played at an andante tempo and it sounded solemn. The brass section reflected these feelings by playing rich tones. The piece lifted up in spirit and repeated some of the melody that was played in the first section. It ended with one last long note while the timpani played in the background. This ended the concert with a memorable feeling of triumph.

I enjoyed all the pieces that the DuPage Symphony Orchestra included in their concert. Each piece was unique yet fit together in the sense that they all left impressions of far off places. My favorite pieces were certainly the ones from *the Planets* suite. They clearly paint Holst's impressions of each planet. I especially enjoyed "Mars, the Bringer of War" because of its intensity. I was also amazed by "Uranus, the Magician" because of its complexity and extreme nature. The concert left me with a sense of adventure and a desire to explore more of the otherworldly sounding pieces that exist.