



Colonel Jason K. Fettig, Director

UNITED STATES MARINE BAND
Sunday, March 26, 2023 at 2:00 P.M.
Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center
Northern Virginia Community College
Alexandria Campus
Major Ryan J. Nowlin, conducting

The Planets

John Williams (b. 1932)
arranged by Stephen Bulla*

Excerpts from *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*

Anthony Barfield (b. 1983)

North Star (2016)

GySgt Amy McCabe, trumpet soloist
SSgt Russell Sharp, trombone soloist

David Gillingham (b. 1947)

Galactic Empires

Battlestar of the Andromeda
Evening Star of the Magellanic Cloud
Earthstar of the Milky Way

INTERMISSION

Gustav Holst (1874–1934)
arranged by Merlin Patterson

The Planets, Opus 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

*Member, U.S. Marine Band

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PROGRAM NOTES

Excerpts from *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*

John Williams (b. 1932)
arranged by Stephen Bulla*

In 1977, John Williams collaborated with director Steven Spielberg for the third time on *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* following successful collaborations on *The Sugarland Express* in 1974 and *Jaws* in 1975. While its reputation may have been eclipsed by other science-fiction film franchises, *Close Encounters* was a breakthrough in filmmaking and both a critical and commercial success. The film received largely positive reviews and was Columbia Pictures' most successful film at the time.

The rich, abstract score and its famous five-note musical motif play a vital role in building the film's storyline of humankind's long-awaited meeting with extraterrestrials. Williams' successful score won two GRAMMY Awards in 1979: one for Best Original Film Score and another for Best Instrumental Composition. Spielberg explains:

The challenge posed to John this time was quite literally from another world. How should mankind communicate with this mesmerizing mother ship? John wanted something that was kind of a signal or musical beacon—he felt that anything longer than five notes was too close to a melody. As simple and natural as the theme now seems, it was anything but simple to compose. We consulted with a mathematician who warned us that there are at least 25,000 ways to combine five notes! Undaunted, John created his inspired combination. Out of those five notes, John went on to compose a finale filled with awe, affection, and reverence, a musical blessing for the transcendent encounter between humans and extraterrestrials.

Williams allegedly wrote over 300 permutations of the five-note motif before Spielberg eventually chose the one incorporated in the film. Williams received an Oscar nomination for *Close Encounters'* score, however it did not win. He was outdone by himself, winning the Oscar for the landmark score for George Lucas's epic *Star Wars*.

North Star (2016)

Anthony Barfield (b. 1983)

Anthony Barfield is a producer and composer based in New York City whose compositions have been performed throughout the United States, Europe and Asia. Barfield has received commissions from organizations such as the New York Philharmonic and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. He made his Carnegie Hall debut in 2012 at the New York Wind Band Festival where his work *Here We Rest* was premiered. Mr. Barfield has performed as a trombonist at Avery Fisher Hall, Dizzy's Coca Cola Club, Alice Tully Hall, the Kennedy Center, among other prestigious venues.

North Star was composed for trombonist Joseph Alessi, trumpeter Allen Vizzutti, and the University of Kentucky Wind Symphony. It was given its premiere performance in 2016. Barfield writes of his work:

North Star is based on The Underground Railroad which was a network of secret routes and safe houses that African American slaves used to obtain freedom. Since the majority of the slaves could not read, they learned a song called "Follow the Drinking Gourd" wherein the lyrics provided escape instructions and a map.

Many slaves escaped at night and used the North Star (Polaris) and the Big Dipper (the drinking gourd) as a guide. During their journey, they would find the "train stations" located in barns, under church floors, caves and hollowed out riverbanks, which provided safety so that they could make it to their destination.

North Star paints a picture of the train ride from the plantation to freedom.

North Star is through-composed work, comprised of three distinct sections. The piece begins with a mournful introduction, first featuring solo trumpet and followed by solo trombone. The soloists largely play in minor tonalities that is broken up by glimmers of hope. The outer sections of the work are punctuated by a rhythmic motif on the hi-hat that evokes a train, while its inner section moves to a major mode and strikes a more optimistic tone, perhaps referencing one of the many "train stations" along the perilous route to freedom.

Gunnery Sergeant Amy McCabe, trumpet soloist

Trumpet and cornet player Gunnery Sergeant Amy McCabe of Bonfield, Illinois, joined "The President's Own" United States Marine Band in July 2006 and appointed to Principal Trumpet in 2022. Gunnery Sgt. McCabe began her musical instruction on piano at age six and trumpet at age ten. After graduating in 1997 from Herscher High School in Illinois, she earned her bachelor's degree in music and elementary education from Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington in 2001. She earned her master's degree in trumpet performance in 2006 from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Her instructors included Charles Geyer and Barbara Butler of Northwestern University, and Steve Eggleston and Judith Saxon of Illinois Wesleyan University. Gunnery Sgt. McCabe has been featured as cornet soloist in William Bolcom's First Symphony for Band on the Marine Band's 2011 educational recording *Flourishes and Meditations on a Renaissance Theme*. In addition, she was a featured soloist on the Marine Band's 2016 and 2018 national concert tours.

Prior to joining "The President's Own," Gunnery Sgt. McCabe was a featured soloist in the Tony/ Emmy award-winning show *Blast!* and a member of MusiCorps, a music education and advocacy program designed to promote music awareness, appreciation, and training in the Chicago Public Schools. She performed with the Chicago Civic Orchestra, the Spoleto Festival USA Orchestra in Charleston, South Carolina, and the Walt Disney World All-Star Collegiate Jazz Band and Christmas Brass in Orlando, Florida. She also received the Roger Voisin Trumpet Award while a fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center in Lenox, Massachusetts.

Staff Sergeant Russell Sharp, trombone

Trombonist Staff Sergeant Russell Sharp joined "The President's Own" United States Marine Band in January 2017. Staff Sgt. Sharp began his musical instruction on trombone at age eleven and graduated in 2001 from Mustang High School in Oklahoma. He earned a bachelor's degree in trombone performance from the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond in 2006, where he studied with Dr. Kent Kidwell, retired principal trombone with the Oklahoma City

Philharmonic. In 2007, he earned a master's degree in trombone performance from Oklahoma City University's Wanda L. Bass School of Music. He has also studied with Lee Rogers, principal trombone with the Washington National Opera in Washington, D.C. Prior to joining the band, Staff Sgt. Sharp was the principal trombone with the U.S. Naval Academy Band in Annapolis, Maryland, from 2007 to 2016. He was also a substitute with the Kennedy Center Opera Orchestra in Washington, D.C.; the Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra in Pennsylvania; the Oklahoma City Philharmonic; and the Annapolis Symphony in Maryland.

Galactic Empires

David Gillingham (b. 1947)

American composer and educator David Gillingham is perhaps best known for his compositions for percussion ensemble and for wind band, which have received widespread performances by both professional and academic groups around the nation. Gillingham earned his undergraduate degree in music education in 1969 from the University of Wisconsin (UW), Oshkosh, after which he served in the military as a musician, initially with the 5th Army Band in Chicago and then with the 266th Headquarters Army Band in Vietnam. He first became interested in composition during this time. Following his military service, he became a middle school band director before returning UW, Oshkosh to earn a master's in music education, and continued to Michigan State University for a PhD in music composition. As an educator, Gillingham taught at Spring Arbor College before joining the faculty at Central Michigan University in 1984, where he currently holds the title of Professor of Music Composition Emeritus. He retired from the university in 2016.

Many of Gillingham's works are programmatic, or describe a narrative or ideas outside of the music. This includes his best known piece for band *Heroes, Lost and Fallen*, which is inspired by the Vietnam War and received first prize in the International Barlow Composition Contest in 1990.

Galactic Empires for band was premièred in 1999 and is another example of Gillingham's programmatic music. It features the composer's signature interplay between the percussion and winds, and is at times reminiscent of some of the more well-known space-themed pieces in the Western classical repertoire. The composer writes the following about the work:

My lifelong fascination with the mysteries of the universe has come to fruition in *Galactic Empires*. Our understanding of distances on Earth, which have clear beginnings and endings, makes it inconceivable that the universe is endless. Galactic Empires is a musical journey through only three of an infinite number of galaxies, two foreign and one which is our own Milky Way. To gain the inspiration for this work, I let my imagination run wild and envisioned each galaxy as having a particular aura which is reflected in the music.

The work is set in three connected movements, each representing a "star" in a particular universe:

I. "Battlestar of the Andromeda Nebula" -- Within the Andromeda Nebula Galaxy lies a star where hate radiates into its atmosphere creating a smoky, black cloud forming a ring around the angry sphere. Close to the surface, one can hear the incessant drumming rhythms of war, for this is an empire bent on destruction of all other life forms in the galaxy. Across the jagged, dark, cold landscape are thousands of doomed bases housing troops and weapons of annihilation. Multitudes of amphibious-like alien creatures clad in silver and black armor move in and out of the domes while hundreds of disk-shaped airships land and take off from the surface, all this occurring against the backdrop of a

sky lit with explosions from other stars of the galaxy as they are one by one destroyed by the empire of the Battlestar.

II. “Eveningstar of the Magellanic Cloud” -- In stark contrast to the Battlestar is the Eveningstar found in the center of the galaxy of the Magellanic Cloud. This is a place of beauty beyond words. Four suns of multiple colors shine upon this star, making the sky appear as a huge domed rainbow. Life on the Eveningstar is one of tranquility and peace. The aliens of this star are thin, stick-like beings with oversized heads and large silver and oval slanted eyes reflecting warmth, understanding, and superior knowledge. The inhabitants of this star are the most advanced of the entire universe and exist in a sort of utopic state.

III. “Earthstar of the Milky Way” -- The Earthstar is the most vibrant and eclectic star to be found in any galaxy of the universe. The humans who inhabit this star have a most interesting history that reflects both the most hideous atrocities and the most marvelous achievements of its people. It has the potential to achieve a status equal to the Eveningstar of the Magellanic Cloud, but must begin to learn from the mistakes of the past. Still, a sense of joy and celebration radiates from the surface of the Earthstar ... an energy field created by unbounded faith and hope for humankind.

The Planets, Opus 32

Gustav Holst (1874–1934)

transcribed by Merlin Patterson

Unlike his contemporary fame as the composer of *The Planets*, Gustav Holst spent most of his life in relative obscurity. In fact, the attention he received for *The Planets* was an unwelcome surprise to Holst. He was a shy and humble man ill-equipped to adequately handle the onslaught of reporters and admirers, who also feared the pressure that popular success placed on a composer. Following the piece’s debut, Holst wrote to a close friend, “If nobody likes your work, you have to go on for the sake of the work, and you are in no danger of letting the public repeat yourself.” Holst continued to develop his distinct compositional voice for the remainder of his professional life, taking care not to simply copy the successful formula of *The Planets*. Though he went on to create strikingly original music, he never again enjoyed the recognition *The Planets* brought him.

Holst was born Gustavus Theodore von Holst in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, England. He was the son of a highly regarded pianist and organist, and it seemed likely that the young Holst would follow in his father’s musical footsteps. Unfortunately, he suffered from asthma and a nerve condition as a child, which would worsen throughout his life and deny him a career as a performer. Instead, Holst turned his focus to composition and teaching. He studied at the Royal College of Music in London, and began writing music strongly influenced by continental European Romantic-era composers like Antonín Dvořák and Richard Wagner. During his student years, he met fellow British composer Ralph Vaughan Williams who introduced Holst to the wealth of musical inspiration in traditional English folk song. This combination of influences, from Vaughan Williams to folk song, helped Holst to create his own straightforward style of composition and provided a stylistic thread that permeated his mature works.

Holst spent his entire adult life as a teacher, nearly all of which was dedicated to the St. Paul’s Girls’ School. It was there, during breaks from class and on weekends, that he began work on what was to become his landmark opus. At the turn of the century, Holst was introduced to astrology by his friend Clifford Bax. He took to it with enthusiasm and started to toy with the

idea of an “astrological suite.” “As a rule, I only study things that suggest music to me,” he wrote, “[r]ecently the character of each planet suggested lots to me.”

However, it wasn’t until early 1914, with World War I looming, that he set to work in earnest. He began to sketch out the first movement, “Mars,” in the new soundproof music wing of the St Paul’s School. He completed this movement along with “Jupiter” and “Venus” in the fall of that year. “Saturn,” “Uranus,” and “Neptune” were added in 1915, and he finally finished the suite with “Mercury” in 1916. The piece is scored for a massive ensemble and the orchestration was at times so dense that Holst’s degenerative neuritis prevented him from writing out the parts himself. He dictated much of the music to his students and fellow teaching staff. The première of the complete suite took place on November 15, 1920, in London under the direction of Albert Coates, and was immediately received with tremendous enthusiasm.

For the remainder of Holst’s life, he was continually forced to clarify the musical intent of the work. For the 1920 première, the composer offered the following:

These pieces were suggested by the astrological significance of the planets; there is no program 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 the mind.

“Mars, the Bringer of War:” With its irregular and relentless rhythms and menacing, unresolved dissonances, the opening movement of the suite aptly represents its descriptor as “the bringer of war.” Not surprisingly, Holst’s contemporaries saw this music as a commentary about the ongoing war, although Holst began composing this movement before the war’s outbreak in August 1914.

“Venus, the Bringer of Peace:” Author Noel Tyl, in his book *The Principals and Practices of Astrology*, notes that “when the disorder of Mars is past, Venus restores peace and harmony.” Following the pounding chords that end Mars, Holst provides relief with the soft and delicate sounds that open the second movement. Undulating chords in the harp and flute give way to singing, liquid melodies.

“Mercury, the Winged Messenger:” The first of two scherzi in the suite is inspired by Mercury, the Roman counterpart to the Greek messenger god Hermes. As Holst asserts in his own notes about this movement, Mercury is “the thinker” to astrologists. Holst depicts the mind musically by sounding two opposing musical keys simultaneously, as different sections of the ensemble engage in an insistent, chattering dialogue.

“Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity:” The central movement of the suite is perhaps the best known. The movement also is the most reflective of the English nationalistic style, giving a nod to composers like Edward Elgar. An opening flourish in the woodwinds provides the backdrop for a succession of heroic and celebratory themes. The central hymn of the movement was later extracted by the composer in 1921, put to words, and titled “I vow to thee, my country.”

“Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age:” This movement was Holst’s favorite. Referencing Tyl’s book once more, Saturn represents “man’s time on Earth, his ambition, his strategic delay, his wisdom toward fulfillment, his disappointments and frustrations.” Like the inevitable passage of time, the music begins with a slow, repeated alternation between two notes. A fragmented melody rumbles in the bass instruments, seemingly out of sorts with the “ticking.” A march-like hymn emerges and builds to a glorious climax, interrupted several times by faster, alarming figures. Like bells atop a church, chimes quietly mark the last section which echoes the

beginning. Unlike before, the passage of time seems more comforting and peacefully signals fulfillment.

“Uranus, the Magician:” In Roman mythology, Uranus ruled both invention and astrology itself. In Holst’s scherzo, the magician is alternatively ominous and playful, casting spells that appear and disappear in quick succession. The magic builds to frenzy with a rollicking dance and a final spell that brings the force of the entire orchestra to bear. In the closing hushed bars, the memory of the episode mysteriously evaporates into the dark.

“Neptune, the Mystic:” In Holst’s time, Neptune was the extreme point of our solar system. To astrologists, Neptune represents confusion and the mystic connection with other known, and unknown, worlds. Holst ends his monumental suite with an ethereal question mark: a movement built on two mesmerizing chords and almost no melody. The harps and celesta quietly paint shimmering stars in the distance while an offstage choir of women’s voices wordlessly dissolves into infinite time and space.