

Welcome to the 2023 BBC Proms



A very warm welcome to the 2023 BBC Proms. It's thrilling to be sharing in an experience in which tradition and innovation sit side by side, and I hope these concerts continue to delight you with familiar favourites and entice you to discover new composers and artists.

Our composer celebrations reflect both sides of that coin, from the works of Sergey Rachmaninov (born 150 years ago) – whose music has featured regularly at the Proms since 1900 – to the less familiar worlds of Dora Pejačević and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. This summer's extensive opera and choral programme brings you landmark operas by Berlioz and Poulenc alongside the UK premiere of György Kurtág's Beckett-inspired *Endgame* and the first complete performance at the Proms of Schumann's ravishing *Das Paradies und die Peri*. Opera also forms part of our family offering this year, with the *Horrible Histories* team taking an irreverent look at the art form, while a bank holiday concert delves into fantasy, myths and legends from TV, film and video games. And, following our series last year of 'Proms at' chamber music Proms around the UK, this year there are performances by leading soloists, ensembles and chamber choirs in Aberystwyth, Dewsbury, Gateshead, Perth and Truro.

The Proms celebrates genres and artists from around the world. This year we bring Portuguese fado and Northern Soul to the Proms for the first time, as well as a tribute to Bollywood playback singer Lata Mangeshkar. We also welcome four very individual artists in special orchestral collaborations – Rufus Wainwright with the BBC Concert Orchestra, Cory Henry with the Jules Buckley Orchestra, Jon Hopkins with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and – as part of our weekend at Sage Gateshead – Self Esteem with the Royal Northern Sinfonia. Visitors from further afield include orchestras from Berlin, Budapest and Boston. The Proms continues to redefine the boundaries of a classical music festival but one thing remains constant – we seek out and showcase the very best.

Every Prom here at the Royal Albert Hall and in our 'Proms at' series is broadcast live on BBC Radio 3, where the station's expert engineers and presenters bring you the live experience wherever you are – and you can listen again on BBC Sounds. You can also enjoy 24 Proms on BBC TV, all available for 12 months on BBC iPlayer.

David Pickard
Director, BBC Proms

Tonight *at the* Proms

Welcome to tonight's concert, in which the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and Jaime Martín programme a Proms favourite alongside two pieces not previously heard here. The Croatian Dora Pejačević is far less known than she deserves to be, and this year – the centenary of her death – offers the perfect opportunity to catch up with a figure whose life story was just as individual as her music. Her characterful Overture was written just after the First World War, during which her time as a nurse had a profound effect on her.

The music of Welsh composer Grace Williams may be a little more familiar, but her Violin Concerto has never previously been heard at the Proms. To set that right is BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist Geneva Lewis, who found herself drawn to its 'beautiful, sweeping musical language'.

To close, Holst's *The Planets*, a work written just a couple of years before Pejačević's Overture, in which the composer conveys the mystery, menace and allure of the planets in our solar system.



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Please be considerate to the performers and other audience members, while also recognising that listeners may show a variety of responses to the music.



Royal Albert Hall

If you leave the auditorium during the performance, you will only be readmitted when there is a suitable break in the music.



Please do not take photos, or record any audio or video during the performance

Prom 32

TUESDAY 8 AUGUST • 7.00pm–c9.05pm



Dora Pejačević Overture 6'

first performance at the Proms

Grace Williams Violin Concerto 21'

first performance at the Proms

INTERVAL: 20 minutes

Gustav Holst The Planets 51'

Geneva Lewis *violin*

BBC National Orchestra of Wales Lesley Hatfield *leader*

London Symphony Chorus (upper voices) Mariana Rosas *chorus-master*

Jaime Martín *conductor*

RADIO 3 SOUNDS

This concert is broadcast live by BBC Radio 3 (repeated on Friday 18 August at 2.00pm) and available on BBC Sounds.

DORA PEJAČEVIĆ (1885–1923)

Overture, Op. 49 (1919)

first performance at the Proms

Dora Pejačević, though born into the privilege of Hungarian and Croatian aristocracy, resolutely rejected an easy path for herself or for her music. Undaunted by the multiple challenges she faced as a composer and a human being, she had a voracious appetite for life, art



Pejačević Castle in Našice, Croatia, the grand ancestral home in which Dora Pejačević grew up; she abandoned her life of privilege to become a composer, following formal tuition in Croatia, Germany and Hungary with an intensive period of self-study

and literature, and came to loathe the upper-crust society into which she was expected to fit, especially during the First World War, when she volunteered as a nurse.

As a prodigiously talented composer and violinist in her teens, she pushed her own musical education further than her official teachers would. Later, she travelled widely, mixing in intellectual, literary and politically radical circles; and although her life was too short (she died aged 37, a month after giving birth to her only child) she became a renowned pioneer for Croatian music. Her Overture, created as a stirring concert opener, dates from 1919.

Although Pejačević's style here conjures fleeting reminiscences of composers ranging from Beethoven and Schumann to Strauss and Korngold, her voice is powerfully individual. It seems to represent an artistic melting pot in which the trends of her time collided and sparked with echoes of the past.

The Overture's structure is a freely treated sonata form, while its harmonic atmosphere is tinged with Impressionistic colours. The heroic, almost obsessively syncopated first theme is transformed and developed throughout, while the second is a brief, lyrical contrast. A new, peaceably folksy melody appears on the woodwind during the central development section. Aspects of all these principal ideas finally unite in the coda.

Programme note © Jessica Duchén

Jessica Duchén's music journalism appears in *The Sunday Times*, *i* and *BBC Music Magazine*. She is the author of seven novels, three plays, biographies of Fauré and Korngold and the librettos for Roxanna Panufnik's operas *Silver Birch* and *Dalia*, commissioned by Garsington Opera.

PREVIOUSLY AT THE PROMS

It is only this year, the centenary of Dora Pejačević's death, that her music has arrived at the Proms. The large-scale Cello Sonata in E minor, Op. 35, was the first of her works to feature, played by former BBC Young Musician Laura van der Heijden and pianist Jâms Coleman last Sunday afternoon. The programme was bookended by Rachmaninov (we are marking the 150th anniversary of his birth). In line with Proms Director David Pickard's aspiration to take the Proms brand out of London, the concert was given amid the Victorian splendour of Dewsbury Town Hall.

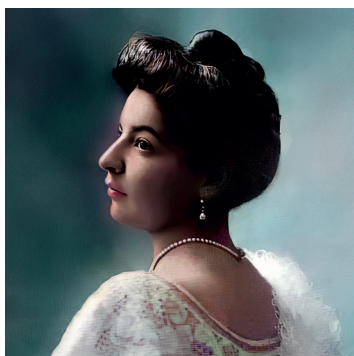
© David Gutman

David Gutman is a writer and critic who since 1996 has contributed extensively to the BBC Proms programmes. His books cover subjects as wide-ranging as Prokofiev and David Bowie, and he reviews for *Gramophone* and *Classical Source*. Delve into Proms history for yourself by searching the online database of all Proms performances at bbc.co.uk/proms/archive.

“I do not at all understand how one can live without work – but how many people can do just that!, particularly the ‘high’ aristocrats ... after experiencing a four-year world war and being confronted with universal misery such as has never been, they ... are only excited when they are threatened with losing part of their fortune.”

Pejačević in a 1920 letter to her friend and future sister-in-law Rosa Mladota-Lumbe

DORA PEJAČEVIĆ



Dora Pejačević was born to nobility. Her mother was a Hungarian countess; her father a Croatian count whose family had long played a significant role in his nation's political and cultural life. Although she was brought up in an idyllic setting in a world

of privilege, Pejačević sought independence outside the roles expected of nobility, eventually distancing herself from the aristocracy. Curiosity and a spirit of rebellion were strong currents in her life.

Music and the arts were embedded in Pejačević from an early age. Her mother Lilla Vay de Vaya was a trained singer, a pianist and a fine amateur artist. Both she and Dora's paternal grandmother encouraged the child's passion for music, art and literature. Educated at home by an English governess, Pejačević became fluent in several languages, read voraciously (in the original language of the author), wrote poetry, played the piano and violin, composed and painted. When her parents recognised that their daughter possessed musical gifts beyond those of a talented dilettante, they arranged private lessons with teachers from the school at the Croatian Music Institute, and sent her to Dresden and Budapest for additional study.

Pejačević's earliest compositions date from her 12th year and include numerous piano pieces, music for violin and piano, chamber music and songs. Not satisfied with what she felt were the limits of her formal studies, Pejačević

later pursued her own intensive course of self-instruction in composition. She described herself as a 'Wagnerian'. Her poetic sensibility and spirituality infused her music with lyricism, colour, contrasts and drama rich in memorable melodies and profound beauty.

Pejačević often appeared in public performing her own compositions, many of which were published and drew the attention of famous artists, including pianist Walter Bachmann and violinist Stefi Geyer, who programmed her music in their recitals. She travelled extensively, mixing with leading artists, poets and intellectuals who were revolutionising all the arts.

In 1913 she entered a new phase in her creative life, turning her attention to orchestral music. She became the first Croatian composer to write a piano concerto. Three years later she began working on her *Symphony in F sharp minor*, only the second symphony by a Croatian. It was premiered in Dresden in 1920.

In 1921, Dora Pejačević married a young military officer, Ottomar von Lumbe, and settled in Munich. She gave birth to their son Theo in 1923 but a month later died from kidney failure.

Profile © Pamela Blevins

Pamela Blevins is a music historian, writer, lecturer, co-founder of Signature: Women in Music and biographer of Ivor Gurney and Marion Scott (*Song of Pain and Beauty*).

MORE PEJAČEVIĆ AT THE PROMS

TOMORROW, 7.00pm • PROM 33
Zwei Schmetterlingslieder, Op. 52; Verwandlung, Op 37b; Liebeslied, Op. 39

MONDAY 14 AUGUST, 7.30pm • PROM 40
Symphony in F sharp minor

For full Proms listings, and to book tickets, visit bbc.co.uk/proms.

GRACE WILLIAMS (1906–77)

Violin Concerto (1950)

- 1 **Liricamente**
- 2 **Andante sostenuto –**
- 3 **Allegro con spirito**

Geneva Lewis *violin*

first performance at the Proms

Grace Williams's Violin Concerto was premiered on 30 March 1950 by the Welsh violinist Granville Jones and the BBC Welsh Orchestra (which later became BBC NOW), conducted by Mansel Thomas. The concert was broadcast live on the BBC's Welsh Home Service.

Williams had been based in London during the war but in 1947 she took the decision to return home to Barry. She took on a number of different musical jobs, and in 1949 became the first British female composer to write music for a feature film when she provided the score for *Blue Scar*.



Roger Goodwin/Alamy

Friars Point, Barry Island, in a 2018 photo; Grace Williams was born on the island and, after the Second World War, returned there, producing – despite ill health – a number of works, among them her lyrical Violin Concerto

That same year Williams told her friend Enid Parry that she longed to compose a Violin Concerto as a vehicle for the ‘lyricism that had been building up’ within her during previous months. This powerful impulse determined the shape of the piece. In contrast to the usual quick–slow–quick movement pattern, her concerto opens with a slow movement, which is followed by a central slow movement and a quick finale.

...

The opening movement takes the form of an extended rhapsody. There are episodes of yearning intensity – including the soloist’s cadenza – but it is the lyrical thread that prevails.

The Andante sostenuto is serene and contemplative. A phrase from the Welsh hymn tune *Yr Hen Dderby* is used as the movement’s point of departure, a tune Williams had used in her score for *Blue Scar*, although this particular sequence was edited out in the film’s final version. Soloist and orchestra incant, elaborate and develop aspects of the tune, conjuring an enchanting musical landscape.

The spell is broken by the Allegro finale, which follows without a break. It is dramatic in tone but also contains witty exchanges between soloist and orchestra, and a brilliant solo cadenza. Even in this brisk-paced movement, however, the overall lyrical ethos of the concerto is not entirely dispelled.

Programme note © Rhiannon Mathias

Rhiannon Mathias is the author of *Lutyens, Maconchy, Williams and Twentieth-Century British Music: A Blest Trio of Sirens* (Ashgate, 2012), and is a music lecturer at Bangor University.

PREVIOUSLY AT THE PROMS

Neglected she may have been but several major scores by Grace Williams have found their way into the schedules. *Penillion* was played by the LSO with Basil Cameron in 1958. Twenty years later it was the turn of *Ballads for Orchestra*, championed by Boris Brott and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales (or BBC Welsh Symphony Orchestra as it was then known). *Sea Sketches* has been the most ubiquitous of her works here. It has been given three times by tonight’s orchestra under Tadaaki Otaka (in 1991 and 2008) and Andrew Manze (in 2022) and its first and fifth movements also popped up in 2017 when the BBC took the Proms outside London for the first time since the 1930s. The Royal Northern Sinfonia was directed by Nicholas McGegan in a water-inspired programme played over several sittings at Stage@The Dock, Hull’s outdoor amphitheatre beside the Humber. With the composer sanctioning so few performances of the Violin Concerto in her own lifetime, it is no surprise that the work has failed to reach the Proms until now.

© David Gutman

PROMS Q&A

Geneva Lewis

violin

You're currently a BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist. How has being part of the scheme helped you?

It has been my first major opportunity to perform internationally. I've also been able to meet many different musicians and organisations, and it's through NGA that my Proms debut has come about. It's so exciting to have people believe in you and support you as an artist.

What's been your relationship with Grace Williams's Violin Concerto up until now?

I got a phone call one day asking if I'd like to perform the piece, and I immediately went to look into it. It was the first time I'd encountered the concerto and – probably because I'm based in America – also my first contact with Grace Williams as a composer. But she has such a beautiful, sweeping musical language that I was immediately taken with the concerto. As I've delved further into it, I've found more and more to connect with, and I'm very drawn to her lyricism. Sometimes the violinist is very much the soloist, with a melodic line soaring over the orchestra, but at other times it feels more like chamber music, with the violinist almost highlighting the role of the orchestral musicians. The trickiest thing about it has been that there's no piano reduction of the orchestral music, so the first time I've played it with anyone else has been during rehearsals for tonight's concert.

It's much less well known than the violin concertos by, say, Beethoven, Brahms or Mendelssohn – does that mean you feel you have to make a stronger case for the music?

I don't think I'd approach any of those pieces particularly differently. After all, music is music, and it's a case of trying to figure it out and do justice to the composer. Tonight, Williams's musical language is the priority. But in approaching better-known repertoire you can be very influenced by tradition: you almost have to learn and then



un-learn a traditional way of performing a piece, so that you can find your own approach. It's actually quite liberating when there's no performance tradition because it's a case of discovering the music for yourself. There's a certain pressure too, of course: as I've become more attached to the piece, I want other people to love it too.

Williams was a violinist herself: can you tell from her writing for the instrument?

I was a little surprised to discover she *was* a violinist, because some of the writing is actually quite awkward! It's quite a challenging piece, to be honest, but in a Beethovenian sort of way, where she doesn't care about the limitations of the instrument when she's making her musical points. But she clearly understands how to get the best from the instrument in terms of its amazing colours, and allowing it to sing in some really sensitive, vulnerable moments too. That's what touches me so much about the concerto.

Interview by David Kettle

GRACE WILLIAMS



Grace Williams was born into a musical family in Barry and played the violin and piano as a child. She studied at University College, Cardiff, at the Royal College of Music with Vaughan Williams, and in 1930–31 with Egon Wellesz in Vienna. While

at the RCM she formed an enduring friendship with Elizabeth Maconchy, and both composers were among those championed by the pioneering Macnaghten-Lemare concerts in London in the 1930s. Another friend from this period was Benjamin Britten, though Williams later turned down his invitation to act as his assistant.

She taught part-time for several years at Southlands College of Education in Wimbledon and at Camden School for Girls in north London, staying on the staff of the school when it was evacuated to the East Midlands during the Second World War. But in 1947, dogged by ill health, she moved back to the family home in Barry. She supported herself by writing music for radio and films and scripts for BBC schools broadcasts, teaching at the College of Music & Drama in Cardiff for a few years and fulfilling commissions from Welsh musical organisations. She died a few days before her 71st birthday.

Williams's music is written in an idiom formed by Vaughan Williams and the late Romantics, but this noticeably toughened in her later years and was always handled with unobtrusive skill. Although she rarely quoted Welsh folk songs, many of her works reflect the

country's history and literature and the rhythms of Welsh poetry and speech. Her one-act opera *The Parlour* was staged by Welsh National Opera in 1966 with considerable success but remained her only stage work. She wrote a number of songs, many accompanied by various ensembles, and a body of choral music including a large-scale *Missa Cambrensis* (1971), with Welsh interpolations, and the radiant unaccompanied *Ave maris stella* (1973). But, chiefly through broadcasts and recordings, she is best known for a handful of orchestral works, including *Sea Sketches* for strings (1944), a strongly argued Second Symphony (1956, rev. 1975) and *Penillion* (1955), which characteristically reinterprets the traditional Welsh form of improvisatory singing on entirely personal terms.

Profile © Anthony Burton

Anthony Burton is a former BBC Radio 3 producer and presenter, now a freelance writer. He has written programme notes for the BBC Proms almost every season since 1975.

INTERVAL: 20 MINUTES

Now playing on BBC Radio 3 ...

Backstage Pass Continuing her series, violinist Tasmin Little meets tonight's soloist, fellow violinist Geneva Lewis.

Available on BBC Sounds



GUSTAV HOLST (1874–1934)

The Planets, Op. 32 (1914–17)

- 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

London Symphony Chorus (upper voices)

Unlike his close friend Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst never wrote an orchestral symphony. Abstract forms he found daunting; he needed some extramusical stimulus to set his imagination working fully. In this case he found it in astrology – his ‘pet vice’, as he was soon calling it – which he discovered around 1913. Working out horoscopes for friends was fun, but it grew more serious when Holst began to realise that astrological symbolism was suggesting music to him, remarkable music. Soon the idea of a set of orchestral pieces based on the astrological character of the seven then-known planets was taking form. ‘It grew in my mind slowly’, he recalled, ‘like a baby in a mother’s womb.’

Composing *The Planets* occupied Holst from 1914 to 1917, the process slowed down by his demanding professional duties as a teacher and by worsening neuritis in his right arm. But something had clearly gripped him – something above and beyond the symbolism of the horoscope. From early youth Holst had had strong mystical inclinations,

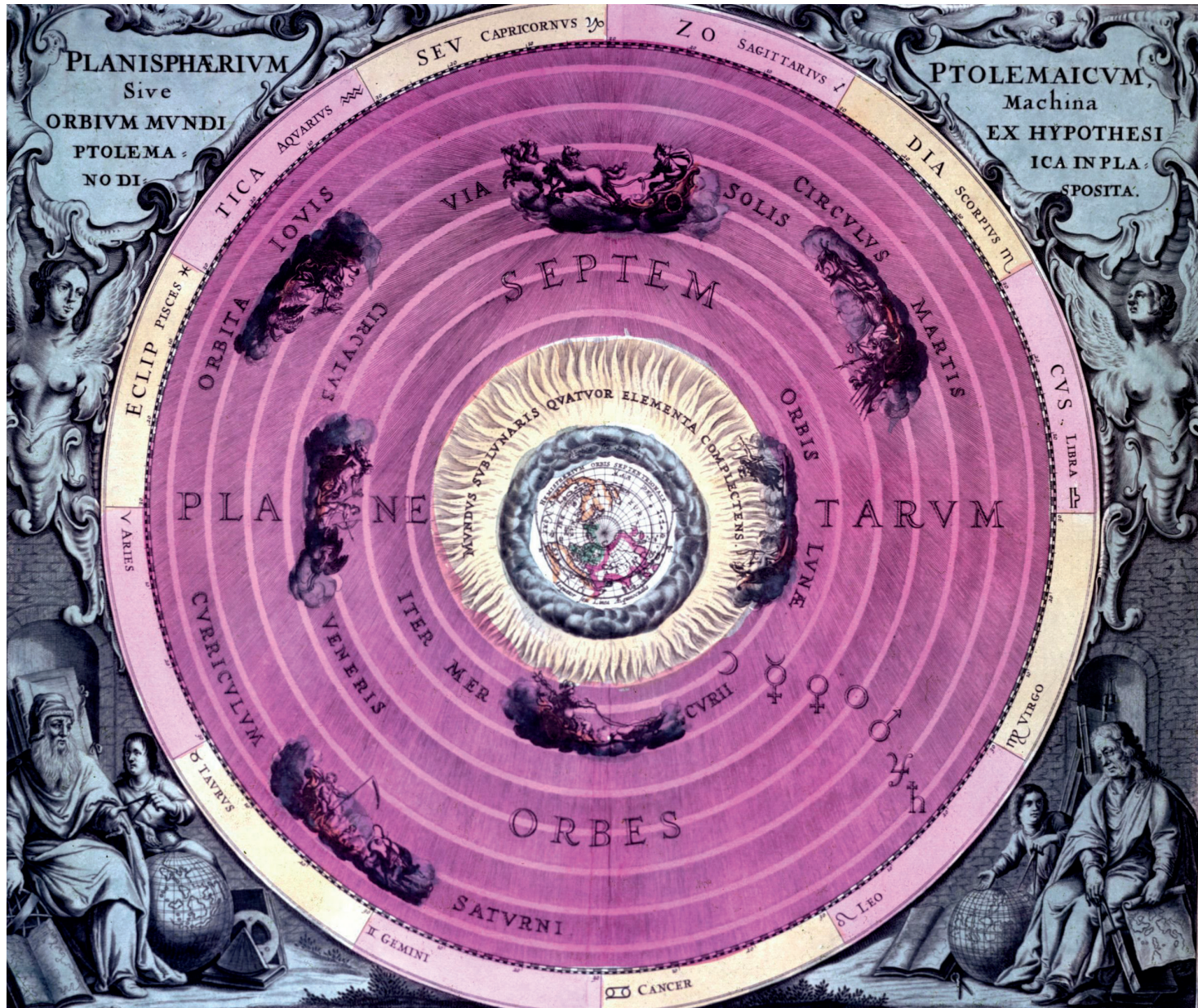
leading him to make serious studies of Hindu and Christian Gnostic scriptures. What astrology confirmed for him was that ‘everything in this world ... is just one big miracle. Or rather, the universe itself is one.’

1917, in the midst of the First World War, must have felt like the worst possible time for a far-from-established composer to bring out a demanding work for huge orchestra; but then came something that felt like a miracle: the wealthy composer Balfour Gardiner put up the money for a private performance in 1918. This, and the public premiere the following year, scored a sensational hit. A few voices were raised against Holst’s audacious musical innovations, but most recognised that something hugely significant, not just for British music, had been born.

...

The Planets begins with a bombshell. ‘Mars, the Bringer of War’ is one of the most terrifying portrayals of modern industrialised warfare in music. Bear in mind that when Holst wrote it, in mid-1914, the First World War was still on the horizon, tanks were yet to be invented and the romantic image of war was still the heroic cavalry charge. ‘Mars’ is a march, but the orchestral colouring is harsh and brutally powerful, while the rhythm is five beats to a bar – what human or animal being marches in five-time? Something elemental has been unleashed, something that can only be satisfied by total annihilation.

‘Venus’ offers maximum contrast – always Holst’s priority when it came to ordering the movements. Here Venus stands for peace, not love, as in ancient Roman mythology, though there are suggestions of erotic longing in the unusually romantic middle section, with its tender violin and oboe solos. The movement begins and ends, however, with music of ethereal stillness, with gently oscillating



A coloured copper engraving by Gerard Valck and Peter Schenk (c1680) after a sky atlas by Claudius Ptolemy, the Alexandrian polymath who was the earliest person to leave writings on both astronomy and astrology

woodwind and harp chords and, finally, liquid decorative work from tinkling harps, celesta and glockenspiel.

'Mercury' is a symphonic scherzo – a rapid, dancing movement in A–B–A form, with more than a hint of English folk song in its climatic middle section (Holst was an avid folk-song collector). The outer sections are all scurrying, hyper-nimble activity (the musical definition of the word 'mercurial'), swerving rapidly back and forth between wildly unrelated harmonies.

If 'Mercury' defines 'mercurial', then 'Jupiter' embodies the adjective 'jovial'. In the words of Holst's astrological table, it stands for 'abundance of life and vitality'. Here the full force of the very large orchestra is felt again, but to very different effect from that of 'Mars'. There is also an abundance of good tunes, including one which became popular as the hymn 'I vow to thee, my country'. Holst did initially consent to the use of the words for the purpose, but he came to regret it: as a serious-minded socialist he regarded 'God and Country' nationalism with suspicion, if not downright horror.

'Saturn' (Holst's own favourite) is another leap into completely new territory. A weary processional builds slowly to a terrifying climax as the desolation of old age turns to something closer to horror. Even as a boy, Holst's physical infirmity, poor eyesight and proneness to depression had made him feel prematurely aged. But then comes a hush, and angelically soothing sounds (woodwind and harps again) accompany a steady climb in the strings from deepest bass to heavenly heights. The possibility of transfiguration and release is glimpsed.

Now comes devilish magic. 'Uranus, the Magician', intones a four-tone musical 'spell' on brass, then timpani, and a weird triple-time dance (starting on bassoons) launches what Holst called 'a series of merry

pranks'. Merry? Perhaps at first, but the games become increasingly alarming, until a colossal climax is built, culminating in a thrilling organ glissando. The end is eerie and ambiguous: the magician's final trick is to make himself disappear before our bewildered eyes.

From magic we progress to mysticism. Holst marks 'Neptune' to be played '*pianissimo* throughout, dead tone', apart from one brief passage where clarinet and violin suggest human wonder at the 'miracle' of the universe. There are not so much themes as shadows of ideas that flow into each other and evaporate, the stunning orchestration including such outlandish effects as harp tremolandos (near the start). Strikingly, the beat is the same five-to-a-bar as in 'Mars' (ONE-two-three ONE-two): the mystic 'reflects' on the horror of war from an immense distance. Voices enter from offstage, to a single note, like an awaking pinpoint of light; then the wordless chorus sing, enraptured, till their song distils into just two chords, rocking back and forth as they fade into nothingness.

Programme note © Stephen Johnson

Stephen Johnson is the author of books on Bruckner, Mahler, Shostakovich and Wagner, and a regular contributor to *BBC Music Magazine*. For 14 years he was a presenter of BBC Radio 3's *Discovering Music*. He now works both as a freelance writer and as a composer.

PREVIOUSLY AT THE PROMS

Now that Holst's planetary survey is so much a Proms staple it is surprising to discover that our founder-conductor Henry Wood, like Gustav Holst himself when invited onto the podium as a special guest, generally performed only selected excerpts. After 10 years of appetisers there was one complete rendering in 1931, directed by the composer, but no more for 20 years. Part of the explanation can be found in a recently discovered miniature score in which Wood mercilessly documents all the technical difficulties encountered by the composer! With rehearsal time at a premium *The Planets* was evidently still a challenge, the unnamed *Times* critic describing the results as 'fine, though inaccurate'. It was Malcolm Sargent who began

the tradition of playing the suite complete more or less every year, clocking up 14 accounts between 1951 and 1966. Much associated with the work elsewhere, Adrian Boult led just four renditions here (in 1953, 1968, 1973 and 1974), a tally almost equalled by Sir Andrew Davis with three performances (in 1976, 1982 and 1999) plus a Last Night airing for 'Jupiter' alone in 1997. *The Planets* acquired an extra heavenly body when first Sakari Oramo and the City of Birmingham Symphony, then Martyn Brabbins and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and, most recently, Edward Gardner and the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain appended Colin Matthews's *Pluto, the Renewer* (in 2000, 2005 and 2016 respectively). The conventional suite has since been presented by John Wilson and the BBC SSO (in 2017), Oramo with the BBC Symphony Orchestra (on 2018's opening night), Kirill Karabits and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (in 2019) and Ryan Wigglesworth and the BBC SO (in 2022).

© David Gutman

“Just before the Armistice, Gustav Holst burst into my office: ‘Adrian, the YMCA are sending me to Salonika quite soon and Balfour Gardiner, bless his heart, has given me a parting present consisting of the Queen’s Hall, full of the Queen’s Hall Orchestra for the whole of a Sunday morning. So we’re going to do *The Planets*, and you’ve got to conduct.”

Adrian Boult

GUSTAV HOLST



Born in Cheltenham, Gustav Holst (he was christened Gustavus von Holst but dropped the 'von' during the First World War) was descended from a family of Swedish origin who had moved to England from Riga in Latvia; his great-uncle Theodor

was a gifted painter who specialised in the demonic and supernatural, and his father Adolphus was an organist, conductor and piano teacher.

A frail child, Holst attended the Royal College of Music in London from 1893, becoming a pupil of Stanford and forming a lifelong friendship with Ralph Vaughan Williams, with whom he shared an absorbing interest in English folk song and the English madrigalists. Neuritis in his right hand made a pianistic career impossible, so he worked as an orchestral trombonist in various orchestras, including the Scottish Orchestra and the Carl Rosa Opera Company. In 1901 he married and settled in London, dividing his life between composing and teaching, especially at St Paul's Girls' School from 1905 until his death, and at Morley College for Working Men and Women (1907–24) and the RCM (1919–24). In 1908 he lived for some months in Algeria, on doctor's orders, to combat asthma and depression.

A convinced socialist, Holst was also fascinated by oriental (especially Hindu) literature, teaching himself Sanskrit: the chamber opera *Sāvitrī* (1908) and *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda* (1907–12) are among the

results. Aspects of mysticism and esoteric study such as astrology (which he called his 'pet vice'), theosophy and gnostic Christianity also absorbed him, as *The Planets* (1914–17) and *The Hymn of Jesus* (1917) attest. From 1916, beginning at Thaxted in Essex, he initiated various choral festivals, and in 1918 and 1919 he worked in Salonica as musical organiser for the YMCA Army Education Scheme for the Near East. Already known as a choral composer, he became something of a national celebrity after the stunning success of the first performances of *The Planets* in the 1919–20 season but was dogged by ill health during his last decade, though he twice made trips to the USA to teach (one pupil there was Elliott Carter) and to conduct at Michigan and Harvard Universities. He died of complications following a stomach operation.

Throughout his life, Holst was concerned to develop an idiom that would express his individual vision: it came to encompass modality, neo-medieval counterpoint, irregular rhythms and bold use of dissonance, all employed in an original way. His mastery of the orchestra went hand in hand with a tendency to economy and austere beauty, reflected in the Thomas Hardy-inspired tone-poem *Egdon Heath* (1927) and many polyphonic choruses; but he also had a 'common touch', exemplified in his works for brass and military bands and the orchestral scherzo *Hammersmith*.

Profile © estate of Calum MacDonald

Calum MacDonald (1948–2014) was a writer, lecturer, broadcaster and, from 1980 to 2013, editor of the new music journal *Tempo*. As Malcolm MacDonald he wrote books on Brahms, John Foulds, Havergal Brian, Schoenberg and Varèse.



The Proms Listening Service

As Radio 3's *The Listening Service* revisits earlier episodes reflecting some of this summer's Proms programming, presenter **Tom Service** takes a wide-angle view of the common themes in this weekly feature

Week 4 Transcendence

It's what it's all about, isn't it? Transcendence, I mean: the reason you're here at the Royal Albert Hall is to enter the magical realm of live music, in which, for the next couple of hours or so, you'll be transported to places of wildness and ferocity, as well as tranquillity and mindfulness, and everything in between, by the performers onstage and the music they're playing.

You're here because music like Walton's First Symphony or Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, Caroline Shaw's and *the swallow* or György Ligeti's *Requiem* puts you in a place of transcendent emotional and visceral extremity. The intensity of these experiences is something we don't often encounter elsewhere in our lives. We can feel and empathise as powerfully as we like with the abyssal terror of the Kyrie of Ligeti's *Requiem* or the death-confronting final scene of Poulenc's *Carmelites*, as the 16 nuns go to the guillotine of the French Revolution, but we also know that, while our inner world might have been irrevocably shaken up, we're going to leave the Hall and safely return to the rest of our lives. We've been invited to experience the catharsis of terror and grief and the limits of life and death, but our actual existence and our emotional security aren't materially threatened. That's the precious, transcendent power of live music: opening bridges of empathy that are safe for us all to cross.

And yet this essential magic of the Proms experience – and of any live concert – is often lost amid the rituals and

conventions of orchestral music, which can seem like strictures of silence and enforced reverence rather than the creation of a parallel dimension of heightened feeling. That's why the Mindful Mix Prom this Wednesday seems like a meditative and unmissable exception within this summer's programme, inviting us to let go of our pressures and stresses with carefully curated music designed to put us in a hypnotic nocturnal reverie.

But it's also possible to de-stress and de-pressurise with the philosophical dialectic of Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra* or the fearlessly agonised torment of Mahler's 10th Symphony: in the intensity of our reactions to any of the music you hear at the Royal Albert Hall this week, the fundamentally transcendent magic of the musical experience is at work, in music that gives us out-of-body chills and thrills, and as we're invited to hear the world in a different way, from the perspective of the composers and performers we're listening to, and the rest of the Proms audience we're sharing it with.

It's not only the Mindful Mix Prom – every concert this season is a chance to immerse yourself in transcendence of the musical moment: so take it as far as you dare!

The Mindful Mix Prom – featuring music by Ken Burton, Ola Gjeilo, Philip Glass, Radiohead and Eric Whitacre – is on Wednesday 9 August at 10.15pm.

→ Next week: **Why Are Classical Audiences So Quiet?**

Join Tom Service on his Proms-themed musical odysseys in *The Listening Service* on BBC Radio 3 during the season (Sundays at 5.00pm, repeated Fridays at 4.30pm). You can hear all 220-plus editions of the series on BBC Sounds. Tom's book based on the series was published last year (Faber).



Jaime Martín *conductor*

PROMS DEBUT ARTIST

Spanish conductor Jaime Martín became Chief Conductor of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra last year. He is Chief Conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra (Ireland), Music Director of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and

Principal Guest Conductor of the Spanish National Orchestra and Chorus, and was Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Gävle Symphony Orchestra from 2013 to 2022.

He was formerly principal flute of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, English National Opera, Academy of St Martin in the Fields and London Philharmonic Orchestra, before turning to conducting in 2013. Recent and future engagements include his debuts with the Dresden and Netherlands Philharmonic orchestras and the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, return visits to the London, Antwerp, Colorado and Galicia Symphony, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic and RTVE Symphony orchestras and a nine-city European tour with the LPO.

Jaime Martín has made a series of Brahms recordings with the Gävle SO, including the two serenades, the C minor Piano Quintet in Schoenberg's orchestration and a disc of choral works, *Song of Destiny*, with the Eric Ericson Chamber Choir. He has also recorded Schubert's Ninth and Beethoven's Third symphonies with the Cadaqués Orchestra and a range of repertoire with the Barcelona Symphony Orchestra. In 2015 he recorded James Horner's last symphonic work, *Collage* for four horns and orchestra, with the LPO.



Geneva Lewis *violin*

PROMS DEBUT ARTIST

New Zealand-born violinist Geneva Lewis studied with Aimée Kreston at the Colburn School of Performing Arts, Miriam Fried at the New England Conservatory, and currently with Mihaela Martin at the Kronberg Academy. She is a

BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist, 2022–24.

Since her solo debut at the age of 11 with the Pasadena Pops, she has gone on to perform with prominent orchestras, including the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Auckland Philharmonia and the Arkansas, Austin, North Carolina, Kansas City, Pasadena and Sarasota Symphony orchestras with conductors such as Giordano Bellincampi, Grant Llewellyn, Dirk Meyer, Nicholas McGegan, Edwin Outwater and Hugh Wolff.

Engagements next season include further performances with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and debuts with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, the Knoxville and Santa Rosa Symphony orchestras, Jalisco Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestre National Bordeaux Aquitaine and Kremerata Baltica.

As a chamber musician she has collaborated with artists including Jonathan Biss, Glenn Dicterow, Miriam Fried, Kim Kashkashian, Gidon Kremer, Marcy Rosen and Mitsuko Uchida, and has performed at Wigmore Hall, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, Chamberfest Cleveland and the Kronberg, Marlboro and Ravinia festivals.

She plays a composite violin by Giovanni Battista Guadagnini from c1776.

BBC National Orchestra of Wales

For over 90 years the BBC National Orchestra of Wales has played an integral part in the cultural landscape of Wales, occupying a distinctive role as both broadcast and national symphony orchestra. It performs a busy schedule of live concerts throughout Wales, the rest of the UK and the world.

The orchestra is an ambassador of Welsh music as well as of contemporary composers and musicians, and its concerts can be heard regularly across the BBC: on Radio 3, Radio Wales and Radio Cymru. BBC NOW works closely with schools and music organisations throughout Wales and regularly undertakes workshops, side-by-side performances and young composer initiatives to inspire and encourage the next generation of performers, composers and arts leaders. Last year alone the orchestra reached over 18,000 young people across Wales through workshops and live performances.

Forthcoming highlights include the launch of a new season of concerts in Wales from October and a new series of concerts dedicated to Welsh composer Grace Williams, to be performed at the orchestra's home, BBC Hoddinott Hall (at Wales Millennium Centre). BBC Hoddinott Hall also acts as a broadcast centre for the orchestra, from where it also continues its series of live-streamed concerts and prerecorded content as part of its popular Digital Concert Series.

Soundtrack recordings taking place this year include the theme tune to the new *Doctor Who* series, a new natural history series with Apple TV and an array of CD recordings with record labels around the world.

Principal Conductor

Ryan Bancroft

Conductor Laureate

Tadaaki Otaka CBE

Composer-in-Association

Gavin Higgins

Composer Affiliate

Sarah Lianne Lewis

First Violins

Lesley Hatfield

leader

Nick Whiting

associate leader

Martin Gwilym-

Jones

sub leader

Ellie Fagg

Terry Porteus

Suzanne Casey

Carmel Barber

Emilie Godden

Anna Cleworth

Juan Gonzalez

Ruth Heney

Barbara Zdziarska

Patrycja Mynarska

Zanete Uskane

Anya Birchall

Zhivko Georgiev

Second Violins

Anna Smith*

Ros Butler

Sheila Smith

Vickie Ringguth

Joseph Williams

Michael Topping

Katherine Miller

Beverley Wescott

Sellena Leony

Lydia Caines

Ilze Abola

Jane Sinclair

Tamaki Mott

Sebastian Canellis

Violas

Rebecca Jones*

Tetsuumi Nagata

Peter Taylor

Dave BaMaung

Ania Leadbeater

Laura Sinnerton

Robert Gibbons

Catherine Palmer

Lydia Abell

Abby Bowen

Lucy Theo

Carl Hill

Cellos

Richard Harwood †

Keith Hewitt ‡

Jessica Feaver

Sandy Bartai

Carolyn Hewitt

Rachel Ford

Alistair Howes

Kathryn Graham

Katy Cox

Sarah Berger

Double Basses

David Stark*

Alexander Jones ‡

Christopher

Wescott

Richard Gibbons

Daniel Vassallo

Emma Prince

Thea Sayer

Elen Roberts

Flutes

Matthew

Featherstone*

John Hall †

Lindsey Ellis

Jenny Farley

Piccolos

Lindsey Ellis†
Jenny Farley

Alto Flute

Jenny Farley

Oboes

Steven Hudson*
Amy McKean†
Ilid Jones
Sarah-Jayne
Porsmoguer

Cor Anglais

Sarah-Jayne
Porsmoguer†

Bass Oboe

Ilid Jones

Clarinets

Nicholas Cox
Emma Burgess
William White
Lenny Sayers

Bass Clarinet

Lenny Sayers†

Bassoons

Jarostaw
Augustyniak*
Lois Au
Alexandra
Davidson
David Buckland

Contrabassoon

David Buckland†

Horns

Tim Thorpe*
Meilyr Hughes
Neil Shewan†
Dave Ransom
John Davy
Tom Taffinder
Lynn Henderson

Trumpets

Philippe Schartz*
Robert Samuel
William Morley
Andy Dunn
Tom Rainer

Trombones

Donal Bannister*
Dafydd Thomas

Bass Trombone

Mark Frost

Euphonium

Huw Evans‡

Tuba

Daniel Trodden†

Timpani

Phil Hughes
Christina
Slominska

Percussion

Mark Walker†
Andrea Porter
Rhydian Griffiths
Max Ireland

Harps

Valerie Aldrich-
Smith†
Jane Lister

Celesta

Catherine Roe
Williams

Organ

Jonathan Hope

* *Section Principal*

† *Principal*

‡ *Guest Principal*

¥ *Assistant String
Principal*

*The list of players
was correct at
the time of going
to press*

Director

Lisa Tregale

**Head of Artistic
Production**

Matthew Wood

**Artists and
Projects Manager**

Victoria Massocchi

**Orchestra
Manager**

Vicky James

**Assistant
Orchestra
Manager**

Nicholas Olsen

**Orchestra
Co-ordinator,
Operations**

Kevin Myers

**Orchestra
Administrator**

Eleanor Hall

Music Librarian

Eugene Monteith

**Stage and
Technical Manager**

Steve Brown

**Head of Marketing
and Audiences**

Sassy Hicks

**Orchestra
Co-ordinator,
Marketing**

Amy Campbell

**Social Media
Co-ordinator**

Harriet Baugh

Digital Producer

Yusef Bastawy

Producer

Mike Sims

**Broadcast
Assistant**

Jacob Perkins

**Senior Radio
Operations
Supervisors**

Andrew Smillie
Simon Smith

**Education
Producer**

Beatrice Carey

**Education
Producer and
Chorus Manager**

Rhonwen Jones

**Production
Business Manager**

Lisa Blofeld

**Business
Co-ordinators**

Christine Holliday
Caryl Evans

**BBC Early Careers
Apprentices**

Analese Thomas-
Strachan
Jordan Woodley

**RWCMD
Placement Student**

William Forrest

London Symphony Chorus

The London Symphony Chorus was formed in 1966 to complement the work of the London Symphony Orchestra. It has performed under many international conductors and alongside major orchestras including the Berlin, Vienna, Los Angeles and New York Philharmonic and Leipzig Gewandhaus orchestras. It has also toured extensively throughout Europe and has visited North America, Israel, Australia and the Far East.

Concert highlights of the current season with the LSO have included Shostakovich's Symphony No. 13 under Gianandrea Noseda, Schubert's Mass No. 5 under François-Xavier Roth and Brahms's *A German Requiem* and performances of *Katya Kabanova* (also recorded), both under Sir Simon Rattle. Other recent highlights include Haydn's *The Creation* under Harry Christophers, Dallapiccola's *The Prisoner* under Sir Antonio Pappano and Mahler's Second Symphony under Rattle at last year's BBC Proms.

The partnership between the LSC and LSO, particularly under Richard Hickox in the 1980s and 1990s and later with Colin Davis, led to a large catalogue of recordings which have won nine awards, including five Grammys. *Gramophone* included its recordings of Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust* and *Romeo and Juliet* under Davis as two of the top 10 Berlioz recordings. Recent recordings under Rattle include Bernstein's *Wonderful Town* and *Candide*, Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust*, Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen* and Beethoven's *Christ on the Mount of Olives*.

The London Symphony Chorus is an independent charity run by its members. It engages actively in the musical life of London, seeking new members and audiences, and commissioning and performing new works.

Chorus Director
Mariana Rosas

Chorus Director Emeritus
Simon Halsey CBE

Associate Directors
Lucy Hollins
David Lawrence
Barbara Hoefling

Chorus Accompanist
Benjamin Frost

Sopranos
Shona Barnes-McCallum
Kitty Benzecry
Anna Byrne-Smith
Doris Nikolic
Lucy Feldman
Amy Fidler
Cora Hardy
Alice Higgins
Sophie Hill
Sally Ho
Debbie Jones
Melissa Nock
Gill O'Neill
Holly Parish
Valeria Perboni
Franziska Braeumer
Eleanor Sterland
Jessica Villiers
Eleri Williams
Rachel Wilson
Sarah Mainwaring
Beren Fidan
Martha Barnes

Altos
Kate Aitchison
Enid Armstrong
June Brawner
Gina Broderick
Sheila Cobourne
Janik Dale
Amanda Freshwater
Julia Gervais
Rachel Green
Catherine Hulme
Jill Jones
Anne Loveluck
Sarah McCartney

Liz McCaw
Jane Muir
Susannah Priede
Natalia Riley
Lis Smith
Alison St-Denis
Franziska Truedstedt

The list of singers was correct at the time of going to press