


The Arts and Life Performance Series at Harding University  
with Centennial Bank proudly presents



# MUSIC OF THE SPHERES

Featuring the **Arkansas Symphony Orchestra**

*Showcasing Harding's Grand Chorus and alumni soloists*

**Geoffrey Robson**, *Music Director and Conductor*

**Valery Saul**, *Associate Conductor*

**7:30 p.m. • Tuesday, April 9 • Benson Auditorium**



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Centennial Bank *proudly presents*

# MUSIC OF THE SPHERES

*featuring the* **ARKANSAS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**  
*showcasing* **HARDING'S GRAND CHORUS and ALUMNI SOLOISTS**

**GEOFFREY ROBSON, Music Director and Conductor**  
**VALERY SAUL, Associate Conductor**

**Tuesday, April 9, 2024, 7:30 p.m.**  
**George S. Benson Auditorium**

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WALLS, Jay Alan (b. 1963)	<i>Galileo's Eyeglass</i>	13'
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VAUGHAN-WILLIAMS, Ralph (1872-1958)	<i>Serenade to Music</i> Andante sostenuto	14'
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## INTERMISSION

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HOLST, Gustav (1874-1934)	<i>The Planets</i>	51'
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- I. Mars, the Bringer of War
- II. Venus, the Bringer of Peace
- III. Mercury, the Winged Messenger
- IV. Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity
- V. Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age
- VI. Uranus, the Magician
- VII. Neptune, the Mystic

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Tonight's presentation is partially funded by the  
Arts & Life Performance Series and the  
Harding University Centennial Committee.

# ARKANSAS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

**GEOFFREY ROBSON, Music Director and Conductor**  
**Valery Saul, Associate Conductor**

## **VIOLIN**

Kiril Laskarov  
*Concertmaster*  
*Dora Paley Ronnel*  
*Concertmaster's Chair*

Andrew Irvin  
*Concertmaster*

Katherine Williamson  
*Assistant Concertmaster*

\*Meredith Maddox Hicks  
*Principal Second Violin*  
*Eric M. Hayward*  
*Memorial Chair*

Kristen Bomberger

◊Linnaea Brophy

+Charlotte Crosmer  
Leanne Day-Simpson

◊Trisha McGovern Freeney

Karen Jarboe

Kristen Kunkel

Abraham Martinez

Beth Massa

Sandra McDonald

Tom McDonald

Jordan Musgrave

Geronimo Oyenard

+Lauren Pokorzynski

Tarah Reynolds

Magdalena Ryszkowski

Leigh Wing

## **VIOLA**

◊Katherine Reynolds  
*Principal*  
*Dr. Howard and Celia*  
*Barnhard Chair*

Nathan Groot

Joe Joyner

Tatiana Kotcherquina

+Timothy MacDuff

Julian Pranata

Beth Robison

Borys Smolaga

## **CELLO**

David Gerstein  
*Principal*  
*Linda Garner Riggs*  
*Chair*

Casey Buck

Joanna Klett

Rafael León

Alexander Seman

+Travis Scharer

Kristin Smith

◊Jacob Wunsch

## **BASS**

Russell Thompson  
*Principal*

John Hunter

Patrick McKlerie

Sara Neilson

Sean O'Hara

Andrew Cody Williams

## **FLUTE**

Carolyn Brown  
*Principal*

Gabriel Vega

Alicia Williams

## **PICCOLO**

Gabriel Vega

Alicia Williams

## **ALTO FLUTE**

Alicia Williams

## **OBOE**

Leanna Renfro

*Principal*  
*Rachel Fuller*  
*Memorial Chair*

Lorraine Duso Kitts

Kristin Leitnerman

## **ENGLISH HORN**

Beth Wheeler  
*Principal*

## **BASS OBOE**

Kristin Leitnerman

## **CLARINET**

Karla Fournier

Erin Cameron

Taylor Johns

## **BASS CLARINET**

Jacob Gatlin

## **BASSOON**

Susan Bell León  
*Principal*

Tom Dempster

Kelly Hancock

## **CONTRABASSOON**

Lora Butcher

## **HORN**

David Renfro  
*Principal*

Robin Dauer

Brent Shires

Tyler Bjerke

Leander Star

Juli Buxbaum

Durham Hill

## **TRUMPET**

Ross Ahlhorn  
*Principal*

Andrew Stadler  
*George Worthen*  
*Memorial Chair*

Carl Mason

Nairam Simoes

## **TROMBONE**

Michael Underwood  
*Principal*  
*William "Bill" Vickery Jr.*  
*Memorial Chair*

Bruce Fasce

David Carter

## **TUBA**

Ed Owen  
*Principal*  
*Greer and Barnett Grace*  
*Chair in memory*  
*of Gov. Frank White*

## **TENOR TUBA**

Gail Robertson

## **TIMPANI**

Rick Dimond  
*Principal*  
*Arkansas Symphony*  
*Orchestra Guild Chair*  
Erick Saoud

## **PERCUSSION**

Madison Shake  
*Principal*  
Erick Saoud  
Doug DeMorrow  
Ryan Lewis  
Jonathan Tomasello

## **HARP**

Alisa Coffey  
*Principal*  
Alaina Graiser

## **PIANO/CELESTE**

Carl Anthony  
*Principal*

## **ORGAN**

Colin MacKnight

\*ASO-UA Little Rock  
Partnership Faculty

+Member,  
Quapaw Quartet

◊Member, Rockefeller  
Quartet

## GEOFFREY ROBSON

Winner of the 2017 Respighi Prize in Conducting by the Chamber Orchestra of New York, Geoffrey Robson has emerged as a force of artistic leadership throughout the United States and the state of Arkansas.

The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra has named Maestro Robson as its next music director after a four-year nationwide search. Prior to his recent appointment, his tenure as the Arkansas Symphony's artistic director and principal conductor was a significant success. His dynamic leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in national and state-wide visibility for the organization. The orchestra's *Bedtime with Bach* online concert series received nationwide acclaim and was featured by the Washington Post and the Kelly Clarkson Show.

Over the past three years, Robson has played an integral role in the planning, development and design of the new ASO Stella Boyle Smith Music Center, which is scheduled to open during his tenure as music director. His influential leadership helped secure funding and community support for the \$11.7 million project.

During his tenure with the ASO, Robson has conducted critically acclaimed and sold-out masterworks, pops, chamber and educational concerts throughout the state. His innovative programming has brought new audiences into the hall and has inspired and energized the orchestra. Robson envisions his new role in the community as a connector, bringing the community closer together and making it more inclusive.

In 2021, Robson conducted and served as executive producer for the recording of Florence Price's *Concerto in One Movement* with the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, featuring pianist Karen Walwyn. This was the orchestra's first commercial release in more than 20 years. He has conducted numerous ballet and opera productions including *The Nutcracker*, *La Bohème*, and *Madama Butterfly* with the Plano (Texas) and Waterbury (Connecticut) symphonies and Opera in the Rock (Little Rock). As a founding member of The Chelsea Symphony (New York), he conducted numerous sold-out performances and served as artistic advisor ensuring the growth and success of the organization. In addition to his rigorous Arkansas Symphony Orchestra schedule during the 2023-24 season, Robson has been guest conducting the Greenville (South Carolina) Symphony and the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra, among other guest appearances.

A champion of new music, Robson collaborates with and explores the music of renowned living composers. In 2016, he conducted the San Juan (Colorado) Symphony in the world premiere of James Stephenson's *Concerto for Hope* with celebrated trumpeter Ryan Anthony. He served as arranger, conductor and violinist for the

world premiere of *Billy Blythe*, a one-act opera based on the life of the young Bill Clinton, by Bonnie Montgomery. He conducted the premiere of *Into the Beautiful North* by Joe Brent, performed by the 9 Horses trio, as well as the premiere of *Richard III, A Crown of Roses, A Crown of Thorns*, an opera by Karen Griebing. In 2021 and 2022, he secured co-commissions of new works by Tania León and James Lee III which were performed by the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra.

An active violinist, Robson is an avid chamber musician and regularly collaborates with musicians across the country. He also serves as artistic director of the Faulkner Chamber Music Festival. In this role, he curates a summer concert series and serves as director of the chamber music camp for students.

Robson served as concertmaster of the Connecticut Virtuosi Chamber Orchestra and as assistant concertmaster of the Waterbury Symphony. He is also recognized for his skill and versatility as a fiddle player and has established himself as a highly sought-after studio musician. He writes and performs string and orchestral arrangements for recording artists to assist them in achieving their goals in the studio. His arrangements have also been featured in numerous Arkansas Symphony Orchestra performances.

Robson studied orchestral conducting at the Mannes College of Music in New York City under the tutelage of David Hayes and holds violin performance degrees from Yale University and the Michigan State University Honors College. Primary violin teachers include Erick Friedman, Dmitri Berlinsky, James Krehbiel and I-fu Wang. He studied conducting at Yale University with Lawrence Leighton Smith, Edward Cumming and Shinik Hahm. Other notable teachers include John Farrer, Neil Thomson, Joana Carneiro, Dirk Brossé and Larry Rachleff.

## VALERY SAUL

Described as a “powerful presence on the podium” by Marin Alsop, Valery Saul is recognized for her dynamic leadership and musicality. She was recently appointed associate conductor of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra and also serves as a cover conductor for the Minnesota Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Charlotte Symphony and Oregon Symphony.

In summer 2023, Saul was invited by Cristian Măcelaru (Orchestre National de France and WDR Symphony Orchestra) to participate in the Romanian Chamber Orchestra Masterclass and at the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music. During the 2021-22 season, she won second place at the Denver Philharmonic International Conducting Competition with a captivating performance of Chopin’s Piano Concerto No. 2. She was also invited to the Domaine Forget Conducting Academy to work with Yannick Nézet-Séguin and Bramwell Tovey where she was awarded the Excellence Scholarship.

Additionally, Saul was selected by Marin Alsop to participate in the AT&T *She's Connected* commercial that highlights the visibility of women in the arts and entertainment industry and was chosen as the 2022 winner of the Gena Branscombe Conducting Scholarship.

Memorable conducting highlights include invitations to participate in masterclasses with the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center and with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. She was appointed conductor for the OperaBox Company in Vancouver, Canada, where she led virtual programs of Puccini's *La bohème* and Handel's "Messiah." She also served as the assistant conductor for the Baltimore Symphony Youth Orchestra and the Hillsboro Symphony Orchestra.

Valery Saul is a graduate of Peabody Conservatory where she earned a Master of Music in 2022. She has been mentored by Marin Alsop, Cristian Măcelaru, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Miguel Harth-Bedoya, David Danzmayr and George Manahan. In addition to conducting, she is a professional opera singer.



# HARDING GRAND CHORUS

The Grand Chorus is composed of members of the University Chorus directed by Kyle Pullen; Concert Choir directed by Jay Walls; and the Harding Academy Chorus directed by Craig Jones.

## KYLE PULLEN, DIRECTOR

Adam Anderson	Avery Hawkins	Morgan Pickering
William Baker	James Heiman	Ethan Price
Elizabeth Beehn	Nora Henderson	Lauren Pullen
Caleb Bennett	Anna Hobson	Kitty Ramirez
Daniel Bennett	Gracie Hoggard	Peyton Rauch
Miriam Bennett	Isabel Hoggard	Andrew Richardson
Juliana Biskner	Katie Hoggard	Darcy Ritchie
Cassidy Blankinship	Mollie Hoggard	Anna Robertson
Ciana Blankinship	Cathrine Hook	Kendall Robinson
Elijah Boone	Sarah Hubbard	Jacob Rooney
Aston Brewster	Joshua Hudkins	Caleb Rudolph
Hailey Britt	Brylee Jeffrey	Kyle Saelzler
Annalee Brooks	Brylee Jobe	Daphne Sexson
Mark Brooks	Aubrey Jones	Ben Shappard
Kate Bruner	Kyndal Jones	Collin Slatton
Helina Butler	Josiah Joneshill	Andrew Smith
Emily Chalaire	Maia Joneshill	Brody Smith
Hailey Collett	Miranda Kiffmeyer	Julie Smith
Declan Cook	Landon Kille	Luke Smith
Rachel Deidiker	Bailey Knappier	Mason Smith
Diego Dominguez	Dalton Lahr	Reagan Smith
Lucy Edwards	Rachel Limburg	Anna Sims
Rachel Emlaw	Isaac Linnett	Madeline Stewart
Mallory Faith	Hannah Logsdon	Tanabeth Stewart
Bailey Floyd	Lola Madden	Jamar Summons
Evelynn Foster	Makayla Malotte	Savannah Sumners
Bradley Franz	Michael McCree	Jobe Thomas
Yukiyo Fujisawa	Makayla McDonald	Ediah Thompson
Abby Furby	Estelle McMaster	Grayson Thompson
Jenna Gaessler	Miles McWilliams	Quintyn Tindle
Adrian Galyean	Josh Mellor	Claira Tittle
Audra Graves	Drew Mickey	Sebastian Vargas
Susie Green	Stephen Mitchell	Chase Wagner
Zane Green	Natalie Mooney	McKenna Watts
Kohl Griffin	Nora Roberts	Nathanael Weber
Sims Griffin	Nathan Mostoller	Aaron Williams
Connor Gross	Everett Mumme	Juliana Williamson
Merek Hailey	Hannah Noguchi	Heather Wilson
Caleb Hartzell	Bonnie Permenter	Laura Wilson
Ben Haukaas	Andrew Phillips	Anna Wright

## ALUMNI SOLOISTS (listed alphabetically)

### Stephen Mark Brown

Internationally acclaimed tenor Stephen Mark Brown has performed in major operatic theaters throughout North and South America and extensively in Europe, Western Asia and China. A small sampling of operatic roles and companies includes Canio in *Pagliacci* with Opera Birmingham and North Shore Music Festival; Manrico in *Il Trovatore* with Piedmont Opera; Cavaradossi in *Tosca* with Asheville Lyric Opera, Cedar Rapids Opera and Orlando Opera; Don José in *Carmen* with Granite State Opera, and Luigi in *Il Tabarro* with El Paso Opera; Paolo Erisso in Rossini's *Maometto Secondo* in Bilbao, Spain; *Madama Butterfly* with l'Opera de Montreal, Opera Memphis and Nashville Opera; and the title role in *Les contes d'Hoffmann* at Palm Beach Opera. Other highlights include Rodolfo in *La bohème* at Minnesota Opera and Boston Lyric Opera; Rodolfo in *Luisa Miller* at Palm Beach Opera; *Faust* at Opera de Marseille; the Duke in *Rigoletto* at De Vlaamse Opera and Miami; *La Damnation de Faust* at the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples and the Teatro Regio in Parma; *Werther* at Palermo's Teatro Massimo and the Teatro Verdi in Trieste; and his San Francisco Opera debut as Alfredo in *La traviata*. Pinnacle moments from his career include collaborations with the late Luciano Pavarotti, Emmy-winning performances on Live from Lincoln Center and multiple European broadcasts including the opening of the season at Milan's La Scala with Maestro Riccardo Muti.

### Emily Eads

Emily Eads, soprano, holds a Bachelor of Music Education in vocal music education from Harding University and a Master of Music in vocal performance from the University of Mississippi. Before returning to Searcy in 2021, Eads sang regularly with the Houston Symphony Chorus including performances of Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Handel's *Messiah*, Rachmaninov's *The Bells*, and Mahler's *Symphony No. 2*. Notable operatic roles include Elisetta in *Il matrimonio segreto* at the Red River Lyric Opera; and Miss Wordsworth in *Albert Herring* and Mademoiselle Silberklang in *Der Schauspieldirektor* at the University of Mississippi. Eads was an elementary music teacher in the Houston area for four years, and she currently teaches a studio of voice and piano students with the Searcy Community School of Music.



## **Laura Eads**

Laura Eads, mezzo soprano, has been a member of the Harding University voice faculty for more than 30 years and currently serves as coordinator of vocal studies. She has been an active member of the National Association of Teachers of Singing since 1989 and served as district governor of Arkansas for this organization for two years. With a Bachelor of Arts in music and English from Harding University and a Master of Music in vocal performance from The University of Mississippi, Eads was a national semi-finalist in the NATS Artist Awards auditions and was twice a regional semi-finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council auditions. She has performed with Opera Memphis, was a guest artist for the Creativity and Madness Convention in Santa Fe and has been a soloist for many local and regional events. Most recently, she enjoyed performing the role of Miss Andrew in Harding University's presentation of the musical *Mary Poppins* and the role of Agatha Trunchbull in Harding University's presentation of the musical *Matilda!*

## **Tommy Ghent**

Tommy Ghent is currently the director of choirs at Bald Knob Schools in Arkansas. His ensembles have performed for both regional and state-level competitions as well as many community events. Ghent also serves as the music director for The Studio-Fine Arts Center, where he teaches in vocal and instrumental areas including semiannual theater productions. Outside traditional work hours, he directs the Bald Knob Community Choir, assistant-directs the Thundering Herd Marching Band, serves as a vocal coach and music arranger for Harding's Spring Sing, and serves as a freelance composer and arranger. Ghent holds a Bachelor of Music Education in vocal and instrumental music.

## **Alice Anne Light**

Praised by Opera Today for her "sumptuous mezzo . . . beautifully even tone, a very wide range, and a sound technique," mezzo-soprano Alice Anne Light possesses a versatile and colorful voice that has led her to success in opera, musical theatre, art song, oratorio and concert repertoire. Recent engagements include Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with Opera in the Rock and the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra; Augusta Tabor in *The Ballad of Baby Doe* with Central City Opera; Thisbe in *La Cenerentola* with the Bar Harbor Music Festival; Erika in *Vanessa* at Utah Festival Opera and Musical Theater; as well as Dorabella in *Così fan tutte* and Jo in *Little*

Women at the UMKC Conservatory. Other appearances include roles in *Dido and Aeneas*, *Madame White Snake*, *Cendrillon*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Street Scene*, *Carmen*, *The Sound of Music* and *Camelot*. Favorite concert performances include Mozart's *Requiem*, Duruflé's *Requiem*, Vivaldi's *Gloria* and Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy* and *Mass in C*. Light holds degrees from Harding University, the University of Mississippi and the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music and Dance. She has served on the faculties of Northwestern Mississippi Community College and William Jewell College, and she joined the faculty of Texas Tech University in Fall 2018.

### **Stacey Neely**

Stacey Neely holds a Bachelor of Music Education in vocal and choral music from Harding University and a Master of Arts in vocal pedagogy from Texas Woman's University. She has been an adjunct instructor at Harding for ten years, teaching music education and private voice. Neely serves as music director and vocal coach for Harding's Homecoming musicals, Spring Sing and Summer Dinner Theatre musicals as needed. She has been featured as a soloist with Schola Cantorum of Fort Worth and the Harding University Chorus.

### **Alex Ritchie**

Baritone Alex Ritchie is a doctoral student at the University of Minnesota, serving as teaching assistant for UMN Opera Theatre where he recently appeared as Nardo in Mozart's *La finta giardiniera*. He has performed throughout the Twin Cities with Minnesota Opera, Mill City Summer Opera, Skylark Opera, An Opera Theatre and the Saint Cloud Symphony Orchestra. With Minnesota Opera, Ritchie was most recently seen as First Scottish Soldier in the revival of the Pulitzer-Prize-winning *Silent Night*. In 2023, he performed as The Count in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* for the inaugural season of Tampa's Sunnyside Opera. Concert appearances include Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem*, Fauré's *Requiem* and Stanford's *The Three Holy Children*. He received a Master of Music from the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music and Dance and a Bachelor of Arts from Harding University, where he studied with Arthur Shearin. He lives in Lakeland, Minnesota, with his wife and three children.

## **Susan E. Shirel**

Dr. Susan E. Shirel is an associate professor of music at Harding University where she has directed choral groups and taught music education courses and private voice since 2011. After completing a bachelor's degree in vocal and instrumental music education at Harding, Dr. Shirel taught primarily secondary choirs in three states for 10 years. She completed graduate degrees at Texas Woman's University and Ball State University, where she studied with Joan Wall and Dr. Meryl Mantione, respectively. As a singer and voice teacher, Dr. Shirel is an active member of the National Association of Teachers of Singing, holding both state and regional offices; her students regularly place at state and regional NATS competitions. Additionally, Dr. Shirel has served as music director for several musical theatre productions at Harding University, including *Elf: The Musical*, *Shrek: The Musical*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* and *Annie*.

## **GALILEO'S EYEGLOSS**

Tonight's performance marks the world premiere of *Galileo's Eyeglass* by Jay Alan Walls, chair of the Harding University Department of Music. The piece is a celebratory work for orchestra commemorating the unquenchable spirit and scientific advancements of Galileo Galilei, with particular emphasis on his discoveries of moons orbiting Jupiter and the rings of Saturn in 1610. The one-movement composition is divided thematically into four parts.

### ***Through a glass darkly***

The title of the opening section evokes the foggy image of Jupiter's four largest moons which Galileo could just make out through his improved, state-of-the-art telescope. Borrowed from the Apostle Paul, the words of the title serve as a fitting description of the clouded vision of the religious establishment that, over time, gravitated toward an adversarial position, opposing the esteemed scientist's perspective on the order of our planetary system.

*Philosophy is written in this grand book that is continuously open before our eyes (I speak of the universe), but the book cannot be understood if one does not first learn to interpret its language, and to comprehend the symbols with which it is written. It is written in the language of mathematics, and its characters are triangles, circles and other geometric figures, without which it is humanly impossible to comprehend a single word; without these, one wanders vainly in a dark labyrinth.*

**Galileo, *The Assayer*\***

*For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face:  
now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*  
**I Cor. 13:12 (KJV)**

### **Medicea sidera**

Part two, translated Medicean stars, bears the name Galileo gave Jupiter's moons. Hoping to gain favor with the Medici family of Florence, the scientist named the moons in their honor.

*Behold therefore, four stars reserved for your illustrious name, and not of the common sort and multitude of the less notable fixed stars, but of the illustrious order of wandering stars, which, indeed, make their journeys and orbits with a marvelous speed around the star of Jupiter, the most noble of them all, with mutually different motions like children of the same family, while meanwhile all together in mutual harmony complete their great revolutions every twelve years about the center of the world, that is, about the Sun itself.*

**Galileo, *Sidereus nuncius*\*\***

### **smais mr milmep oet ale umibunen uggtair as**

Turning his gaze toward Saturn, Galileo observed that it was not perfectly round. Not sure what he had found but wanting to make certain his place in history for this discovery, he sent an anagram, the title of part three of *Galileo's Eyeglass*, to his northern colleague, Johannes Kepler, to verify his primacy without yet having to explain it. Although never deciphered properly at the time, when unscrambled, the letters spell "Altissimum planetam tergeminum observavi" or "The most distant planet I observed to be triple-bodied."† Through his early telescope, the rings appeared to be smaller, companion bodies on either side, or bulges around Saturn's waist.

*...I render endless thanks to God that it pleased him to make me alone the first observer of something marvelous, kept hidden for all these centuries.*

**Galileo, *Letter to Belisario Vinta*‡**

### **An infinite world**

The final section draws its title from Galileo's description of the vastness of the universe he was just beginning to comprehend.

The exuberance of the concluding musical themes seeks to embody the scientist's thrill of discovery and his victory over a mountain of obstacles. Despite his conflict with church leaders in Rome, for example, Galilei maintained a constant faith in the creator.

*Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.*

**Gen. 15:5 (NKJV)**

*... you will behold through the telescope a host of other stars, which escape the unassisted sight, so numerous as to be almost beyond belief. ...*

**Galileo, *Sidereus nunciust*†**

To accentuate the historical and artistic context of Galileo's momentous life, Walls transcribed and interspersed throughout the composition music originally written for lute by Galileo's brother, Michelangelo Galilei, who was a professional musician. The scientist himself was no amateur musician, as he was instructed in the art of music by his father, a member of an elite group of Florentines who created modern opera.

*Galileo's Eyeglass*, the culmination of Walls' doctoral studies in music at the University of North Texas, is lovingly dedicated to the memory of the composer's father-in-law, John C. Little, a distinguished professor of science at Abilene Christian University. He was a great scientist, scholar and teacher in his own right and an even greater man of faith.

\* Walls translation from the original text of Galileo's *Il saggliatore* (The Assayer), chap. 6, in *Opere di Galileo Galilei*, ed. Ferdinando Flora, Galileo e gli scienziati del seicento, La Letteratura italiana: storia e testi, v. 34, n. 1 (Milan: R. Ricciardi, 1953), 121.

\*\* Galileo Galilei, *Sidereus nunciust*, trans. Albert Van Helden (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 31.

† Walls translation.

‡ Walls translation from a letter to Belisario Vinta, 30 Jan., 1610, in v. 10 of *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, ed. Antonio Favaro (Florence: G. Barbera, 1890-1909; reprinted 1964-1966), 280-281.

†† G. Galilei, *Sidereus nunciust*, excerpt trans. by Edward Stafford Carlos, in *Galileo's Commandment: An Anthology of Great Science Writing*, ed. Edmund Blair Bolles (New York: Freeman, 1997), 101.

## SERENADE TO MUSIC

In Jan. 1938, Vaughan Williams received a request from Sir Henry J. Wood for a work to be performed at a concert planned for Oct. 5, 1938, to mark the 50th anniversary of his debut as a conductor. Vaughan Williams replied that it would be an honor to compose something “in your praise” and wondered if they should ask the Poet Laureate John Masefield for a text. Wood replied on Jan. 25 that he did not want anything in praise of himself, but rather “a choral work that can be used at any time and for any occasion. I would not think of asking you to write a work that might only be used the once, which would naturally be the case were it written round myself.” Wood later suggested a work for 16 singers who had sung many times with him at festivals and the Promenade Concerts. Vaughan Williams reported this to his friend Ursula Wood (who in 1953 would become his second wife), adding that he had always wanted to set the Jessica and Lorenzo scene (Act V, Scene 1) from Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*. “Eight Jessicas and eight Lorenzos?” she asked. He replied, “No, just a little bit for each voice.” Vaughan Williams sent Wood the manuscript of the work on June 2.

The parts allotted to each of these singers are indicated in the score by their initials, including their participation in choral passages. It is uncanny how Vaughan Williams captured the vocal characteristics of all 16 in such brief phrases, and we are fortunate that their artistry is preserved in the recording made a few days after the first performance.

The *Serenade* can be performed by four solo singers (soprano, alto, tenor and bass) and chorus, or all the solo parts may be sung in chorus. There is also a version for orchestra without voices, made at Wood’s suggestion in 1939. As he hoped, the *Serenade* has outlived the occasion for which it was written and is widely regarded as one of the most beautiful and inspired of all settings of Shakespeare.

— Michael Kennedy, 2008, from the introductory notes, *Serenade to Music*, Oxford University Press.

Tonight’s performance of *Serenade to Music* is presented by the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra in collaboration with Harding’s

Grand Chorus and alumni soloists. Apart from the sheer beauty of this musical masterpiece, the work was selected for inclusion in the concert due to its astronomical theme, which aligns with the evening's program. The text, inserted below from *The Merchant of Venice*, was extracted by Ralph Vaughn Williams from a discussion among characters in Shakespeare's play pertaining to the philosophical topic of the music of the spheres. The conversation among the play's protagonists reflects the often-held belief at the time that the planets and other celestial bodies emit musical frequencies as they orbit throughout the solar system. The text itself is intriguing, but when coupled with the sublime music by Vaughn Williams, it is no wonder that the great pianist and composer Sergei Rachmaninoff was moved to tears at the premiere of the work in London.

*Serenade to Music* text:

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!  
Here will we sit and let the sounds of music  
Creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night  
Become the touches of sweet harmony.  
... Look how the floor of heaven  
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:  
There's not the smallest orb that thou behold'st  
But in his motion like an angel sings,  
Still quiring to the young-ey'd cherubins;  
Such harmony is in immortal souls;  
But, whilst the muddy vesture of decay  
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.  
Come, ho! and wake Diana with a hymn:  
With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear,  
And draw her home with music.  
I am never merry when I hear sweet music.  
The reason is, your spirits are attentive:  
... The man that hath no music in himself,  
Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds,  
Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils;  
The motions of his spirit are as dull as night,  
And his affections dark as Erebus;  
Let no such man be trusted.  
Music! Hark! ... It is the music of the house.  
Methinks it sounds much sweeter than by day.

Silence bestows that virtue on it ...  
How many things by season season'd are  
To their right praise and true perfection!  
Peace, ho! The moon sleeps with Endymion,  
And would not be awak'd!  
... Soft stillness and the night  
Become the touches of sweet harmony.

— William Shakespeare, c.1564-1616, *The Merchant of Venice*

## THE PLANETS

During a tour of Spain in 1913, a fellow traveler introduced Gustav Holst to astrology. Soon afterward, he wrote to a friend, "...recently the character of each planet suggested lots to me, and I have been studying astrology fairly closely." The large-scale orchestral suite that resulted from this interest depicts the astrological character of the seven planets in our solar system (as opposed to their mythological personalities, although the portrait of Venus manages to conjure both her mythological beauty and astrological peacefulness). Only seven planets are included, since Holst decided not to include the Earth, and the existence of Pluto was not confirmed until 1930.

He completed Mars, the opening movement, in a rural cottage during August 1914, and the remaining six movements over the next two years. One reason for his not completing it more quickly was his fear that no orchestra big enough to handle his lavish demands would be available during wartime. He hadn't counted on the generosity of a wealthy friend, Balfour Gardiner. This noble patron hired a hall, an orchestra and a conductor to rehearse and perform *The Planets* for an invited audience of 300. That performance was given by the New Queen's Hall Orchestra under Adrian Boult (later Sir Adrian) on Sept. 29, 1918. The first public performance of the complete work followed on Nov. 15, 1920, with Albert Coates conducting the London Symphony Orchestra.

The opening movement, Mars, the Bringer of War, portrays a world in the grip of cold, implacable brutality. Brass and percussion hold center stage throughout, pounding out harsh



blocks of sound over an implacable, motor-like rhythmic tread. Holst's use of five beats to the bar instead of the usual two, three or four increases the uneasiness. After a grindingly dissonant climax, the death machine pauses desolately for a moment only to power recklessly ahead to a devastating conclusion.

Early audiences were convinced that Holst intended Mars as a portrait of the Great War, but in fact he had completed it just before that conflict broke out. Perhaps he considered it a cautionary vision of the madness and inhumanity of all wars. His daughter, Imogen, recalled that listeners at the private premiere "found the clamor of Mars almost unbearable after having lived through four years of a war that was still going on."

A solo horn summons Venus, the Bringer of Peace. Here is total contrast: a calm, tranquil reverie, set far from the scene of any conflict, scored in delicate pastels and shot through with gorgeous solo passages.

Two contrasted scherzos follow. Mercury, the Winged Messenger flits by on transparent, gossamer wings. Holst associated this character with the process of human thought. Something of that swift, quicksilver process may be heard in the chuckling woodwinds, darting strings and tinkling celesta. Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity, on the other hand, has both jovial feet planted firmly on the ground. Robustly scored tunes reflecting Holst's study of English folk dances drive the opening and closing sections. In the central panel, the strings introduce a stately, hymn-like theme evoking a more ceremonial type of rejoicing. Words by Spring Rice were later added to it for the patriotic song *I Vow to Thee, My Country*. In the delirious coda, the very stars and planets seem to join the swirling crowds of dancers.

Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age was Holst's favorite movement of the suite. It certainly communicates the greatest emotional depth. This miniature-tone poem set forth his views on the stages of human life: the uncertain beginning (restless activity over slowly alternating chords in flutes and harps); the struggles and heartbreaks of maturation (a solemn march building slowly to a harsh climax); and finally, gratifyingly, the emergence in late years of wisdom, with its serene acceptance of imperfection and mortality.

Next comes the dynamic conjuring act of Uranus, the Magician. Brass cast the spell. As in *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* by Paul Dukas, the bassoons are the first to respond. Holst put his huge ensemble through many spectacular paces, dramatic and grotesquely humorous alike. A mad, merry dance tune repeatedly threatens to careen out of control. The timpani and low brass cavort like spellbound elephants. A final incantation leads to a hushed, unsettled close. The suite concludes with the diaphanous, disembodied meditations of Neptune, the Mystic. Set once again in the unsettling realm of five beats to the bar, the music arrives as if having traveled across vast distances of outer and inner space. Mid-way through, the ethereal sound of a wordless female chorus floats in from offstage. In the final bars, the orchestra falls silent, and the voices echo over and over until they fade into silent infinity.

Program Notes by Don Anderson © 2023

**Make plans now to join us for next season's Arts & Life events including a return appearance by Irish tenor and PBS sensation, Emmet Cahill. Also, in collaboration with Beats & Eats and the Clifton L. Ganus Jr. Distinguished Chair of History and Political Science, the widely acclaimed early jazz group from New Orleans, Tuba Skinny, will perform during Harding's family weekend, Sept. 27-28, 2024.**

