



Celestial Grandeur

A Word from the Music Director...

Dear Educator,

We live in a fast-paced world full of audio and visual stimuli, with loads of information coming toward us at warp speed and our experiences being a multi-sensory explosion! Stories are being told through our involvement with many different media platforms. This year the Billings Symphony Orchestra presents a concert comprised of selections from Gustav Holst's *The Planets*. We will guide audiences through our wonderful, fanciful interpretations of Holst's classic.

To accompany this concert, we have put together this Education Guide. It is our hope that it may complement what you are already doing in the classroom and serve as a valuable resource. It will help prepare your students for the concert and can also be used as a review afterward. Included are activity ideas and discussion points, in which we encourage you and your students to use your imagination and creativity to act as a springboard to further learning about the selections we'll be performing!

We are excited to welcome you to the Billings Symphony Orchestra, and we hope that you and your students enjoy the concert!

Sincerely,

Anne Harrigan
Music Director

School Concert Program 2023

April 21, 2023

We are so excited to welcome over 1300 students to experience the Billings Symphony Orchestra. With a little preparation, your symphony visit can be very exciting, educational, and entertaining! There will be a lot going on at the concert and with this Education Guide, we hope we can make your visit with us the best it can be and make you want to return to experience more music with us!

Concert Order

The concert will be 45-55 minutes with lots of different types of music. Below is a list of all of the songs we'll be playing. We have included our favorite links to recordings later in this guide, but there are many recordings you can find of these songs, so try to listen to a few different versions! The more you listen to them, the more you'll appreciate the concert.

- 1. National Anthem** - *All students will be asked to stand and sing along!*
- 2. Also Sprach Zarathustra – Strauss**
- 3. Overture to La Clemenza di Tito – Mozart**
- 4. The Planets – Holst**
 - Mars**
 - Venus**
 - Mercury**
 - Jupiter**
 - Uranus**
- 5. Star Wars Medley – Williams**

What to Expect & What Should I Do?

If you've never seen an orchestra concert before, there will be a lot of new experiences when you come. There will be many other students coming, so it's important that you are on your best behavior. Always be sure to listen to adults and follow directions very closely. When you are listening to music played in front of you, it's called "Live Music" because it's becoming alive for the first time!

When the music starts, be sure to do three things:

1. BE QUIET: Even if you're excited and whispering to your neighbor about the music, with hundreds of other students there too, that can become loud and a distraction to your neighbor. Save your thoughts until after. Just enjoy the concert and everything you experience!

2. LISTEN: Listen very carefully to the music. You will hear things that sound different when it is played in front of you than when you are listening to a recording.

3. LOOK: There are a lot of neat things happening on the stage when you are listening to live music. Be sure to pay attention to all the different instruments, musicians and even the building. Live music is very special - observe it all!

A Note to Educators

The more you use this guide with your students, the more they'll enjoy and appreciate this experience. This was written with elementary school-aged students in mind, so you will likely need to adapt it to your classroom whether it be for age or the needs of your specific students. This might look like leaving out sections or adding additional steps to challenge your students. Use your creativity to adapt as needed, but here is an example as to how you might want to adapt the "Composer Information" section for older students.

Dates: What was happening in America during the time he was born, lived and died?

Geography: Study a map where the composer lived and discuss the area, customs, and culture of the area.

Life Events: Compare similarities/differences from the composers childhood and life to the students.

If You Like...: Listen to other composers who have similarities to the composers music. Discuss as a class what is the same and different about the music.

Instruments of the Orchestra

The orchestra you'll be seeing is made of up of four different "families" of instruments. Read below, then try to find them on the orchestra map to the right.

Strings

Includes **VIOLINS, VIOLAS, CELLOS, and BASSES.**

The string family is all made of wood with a hollowed center. Strings are pulled tightly across the front of the instrument. The strings vibrate to create a sound by either pulling the bow against it or pulling a finger on it.

Brass

Includes **TRUMPETS, FRENCH HORNS, TROMBONES, and TUBAS.**

These instruments are made of metal and have a combination of tubes and valves (buttons). Sound is made when the musician buzzes (vibrates) their lips into the small end of the instrument called the mouthpiece. The musicians move the slides and valves, in addition to tightening and loosening their lips to make their notes change.

Woodwinds

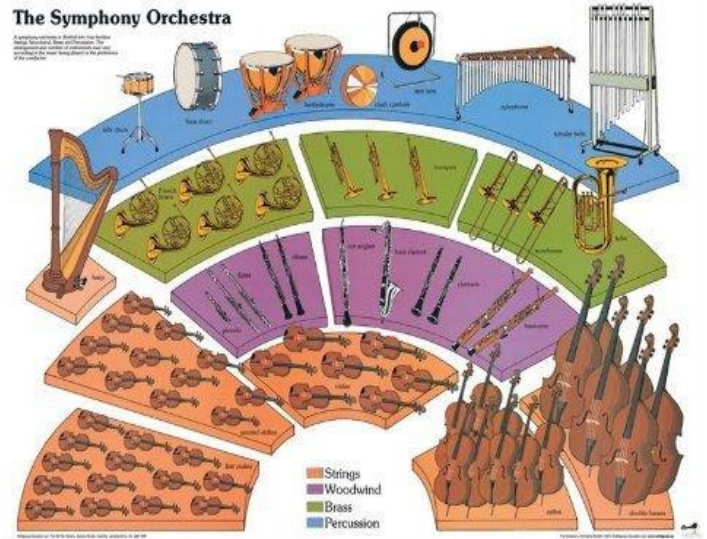
Includes **FLUTES, OBOES, CLARINETS, and BASSOONS.**

This family has instruments made of both wood and metal, but almost all have a small piece of wood on the small end of their instrument called a reed. The musician blows into the reed which makes it vibrate and the instrument amplifies the sound. The only instrument in the family that doesn't have a reed is the flute, which the musician blows over to create the sound. All musicians press their fingers on the keys (buttons) of the instrument to change the notes.

Percussion

Includes **SNARE DRUM, XYLOPHONE, BASS DRUM, TIMPANI, TRIANGLE and MUCH MORE!**

This family has been around since humans started making noises. To make a sound



<https://www.wildgoose.education/posters-music/the-symphony-orchestra->

on a percussion instrument you either hit, shake or scrape it. This can be anything from pots and pans in your house to the timpani you see on stage. The percussion family takes up the back row of the orchestra, and you'll see the musicians moving between multiple instruments throughout the concert, or even within a song.

Piano

The piano is actually a part of both the percussion and string family. The sound is made by little hammers hitting strings, which create the sound!

Conductor

The person standing in front of the orchestra waving their hands, often with a stick (called a baton), is called the conductor. They help to make sure that all of the musicians on stage start, stop and play the music together. They must know the music so well that they know what every musician should be playing and what it should sound like. They are also the person to decide the speed (tempo) of the music and are often the person to give suggestions or ideas to the musicians in rehearsal as to how to improve. Their role is similar to a coach on a sports team, while they might not be playing the music, they are very important to encouraging, helping and directing the orchestra to be the best they can be.

The photo below is Maestra **Anne Harrigan**, who is the Billings Symphony's Artistic Director and Conductor. You'll see her conducting the orchestra at the concert!



Also Sprach Zarathustra

Composed By: Richard Strauss (June 11, 1864-Sept 8, 1949)



About the Composition & Composer

Translated to "Thus Spoke Zarathustra", this piece was written in 1896 and was based upon a book by Friedrich Nietzsche that has the same name. The introduction to the piece called "Sunrise" became very popular in 1968 when it was used in a film called *2001: A Space Odyssey*. We will be playing "Sunrise" at the concert.

Listen

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-QFj59PON4)

[QFj59PON4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-QFj59PON4)

The Planets

Composer Information



Gustav Theodore Holst

Born: September 21, 1874

Died: May 25, 1934

Lived in: England

The Child & Student

- Gustav had a younger brother named Ernest Cossart who became a very famous actor.
- He came from three generations of musicians. His father was from Sweden and mother was from England.
- Gustav was shy and quiet and preferred to not be in the spotlight.

- Gustav went to the Royal College of Music to study composition (writing music) in London.

The Musician

- Gustav learned to play the piano, violin, and piano as a child. He wanted to play the piano but had to stop because he had neuritis in his right hand.
- Holst played the trombone professionally and worked as a musician playing with orchestras for many years.

The Teacher

- Holst was said to be a great music teacher. He taught music at a famous all-girls school for girls (St. Paul's Girls' School) and Mosley College.
- Holst used a lot of the music he was teaching his students in the classroom in his pieces.

The Composer

- Holst was considered a “Romantic” Composer.
- While very inspired by English Folk Music, he was also inspired by other music and composers including Hindu music and other modern European Composers (like Igor Stravinsky).
- He wrote for many different types of groups including orchestras, choirs, operas, and solo instruments.

If you like Holst, you should also listen to:

Ralph Vaughn Williams, Maurice Ravel, Igor Stravinsky, Richard Wagner, Richard Strauss

About the Composition

- Written between 1914-1916.
- Seven Movements (a separate piece of music that is a part of a larger piece of music).
- Inspired by Holst's interest in Astrology (See definition below). He learned about Astrology from a friend in 1913 and became very interested and wanted to write a piece about it.
- Originally written for two pianos and an organ, then later changed to be played by an orchestra.
- Each movement is about a planet in our Solar System and the astrological character associated with the planet. Each piece has the name of the planet and “The Bringer of...” to describe the character it was written about.

- The whole piece was first publicly performed by the London Symphony Orchestra until 1920 (four years after he finished it). Before then, it was only played in pieces.
- Holst's favorite movement was "Saturn: The Bringer of Old Age"

To be clear, Holst wrote *The Planets* about **Astrology** and *not* **Astronomy**. What's the difference?

Astrology - How space, stars, and planets relate to human beings. This includes horoscopes, mystical beliefs, and stories.

Astronomy: The science of space - what is actually there!

Astrological Description of Holst's Planets:

Mars, the Bringer of War: Action, Energy, Aggression. (God of War)

Venus, the Bringer of Peace: Love, Pleasure, Happiness. (Goddess of Love)

Mercury, the Winged Messenger: Messenger, Expression, Communication. (Messenger of the Gods)

Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity: Honor, Knowledge, Law. (King of Gods)

Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age: Structure, Limitation, Responsibility. (Father of Zeus)

Uranus, the Magician: Discovery, Innovation, Progressive. (God of the Sky and Heavens)

Neptune, the Mystic: Inspiration, Dreams, Enlightenment. (God of Sea)

For this concert, we will only be performing the movements below. Also see some of our favorite live recordings found online:

Mars, the Bringer of War - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cXOanvv4pIU>

Venus, the Bringer of Peace

Mercury, the Winged Messenger –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dcMSNgvxpU>

Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGfwxpuY2jY>

Uranus, the Magician - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T0Fx24Xzc3U>

Activities

Each of these activities can be done quickly, so consider doing one of these for 5-10 minute on different days.

Group Brainstorm

- Talk about each movement and the astrological character.

- Guess what the music might sound like. Brainstorm musical keywords and descriptions.
- LISTEN!
- Compare what you thought it would sound like to what it actually does. Was it what you expected? Why or why not?

Arts Project

- Have one piece of paper per movement. Draw a line down the center.
- Talk about each movement and the astrological character. Give some time to have the students draw a picture of what they imagine in their heads.
- Listen to the movement and have them redraw the picture as they listen on the other side.
- Have students share their drawings.

Learn About Each Planet

Study the actual planet before listening to each recording and compare what you learned about the planet to the music.

Ostinato Practice

- Discuss the term “Ostinato”: A continually repeated musical phrase.
- The movement “Mars” has an ostinato from the beginning. Practice saying the below ostinato with the words, singing along with the recording:



The above “Ostinato” activity is a part of an extended lesson by London Philharmonic Orchestra.

Visit here for full lesson: <https://www.lpo.org.uk/education/resources/747-lpo-ks2-resources-gustav-holst-the-planets/file.html>

Fun Video Viewing

Star Wars Comparison Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pM2SozsyPE>

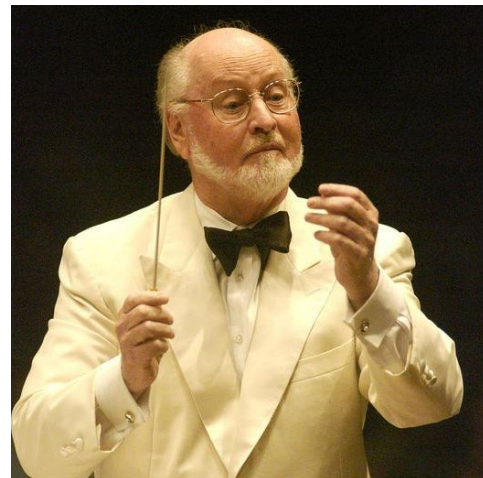
Flashmob of “Jupiter” in a mall - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q3cpOrB1GW8>

Star Wars: Medley & Finale

Composed By: John Williams (February 8, 1932-Present)

About the Composition & Composer

John Williams has been the composer of all of the music for the *Star Wars* movies. Drawing influences from many famous pieces, including Holst's *The Planets*, his scores for the movies have become some of the most well-known musical themes of the modern generation. *The Force Awakens* was the 7th movie John Williams scored for the series and was released in 2015.



Listen

https://youtu.be/47td_ciBlpk?t=364

Education Guide Sources: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Gustav-Theodore-Holst>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustav_Holst | https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Planets

<https://cafeastrology.com/> | <http://www.classicsforkids.com> | <https://musilesson.com/parts-bow-need-know/>

<https://musicwithvision.medici.tv/clef-notes/this-week-in-music-history/the-opening-of-carnegie-hall-1891/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyotr_Ilyich_Tchaikovsky | <https://houstonsymphony.org/tchaikovsky-violin-concerto/>

https://www.yamaha.com/en/musical_instrument_guide/violin/mechanism/