

INSTRUMENTALISTS

Violin I

Paul Navratil,
Concertmaster
Jennifer Arel
Gillian Arnott
Barbara Horn
Hyun-Soo Kim
Saeko Russell
Laurel Thurman

Violin II

Scott Lehmann
Cheryl Bayline
Kay Berris
Susan Cutlip
Maureen Davis
Amanda Fish
Michael Geigert
Jennie Macione
Diane Tewkesbury
Johanna Wolfe

Viola

Ryan Deguzis
Cheryl Chase
Barbara Glenister
Alison Palm
Don Shankweiler

Cello

Sondra Boyer
Katherine Arzt
Cindy Cromwell
Cathleen Hammel
Robert Jeffers
Alex Renner
Aramis Ruiz
Elizabeth Zambrano

Bass

Liz Davis-Porter
Charles Seivard
Fred Wengrzynek

Flute

Joan D'Auria
Hannah Glenister
Sandra Smith Rosado

Piccolo

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Oboe

Helen Zincavage

Clarinet

Rick Bennett
Shannon Copeland
Jessica Pratt

Bass Clarinet

Joe Tomanelli

Bassoon

Peggy Church
Bill Clark

Horn

Caroline Allain
Virginia Eurich
David Hiscox
Laura Michaels
Beth Pratt
Kurt Scimone

Trumpet

John Bova
Sam Eurich
Bob Lemons
Ed Pitkin

Euphonium

Ross Koning

Trombone

Gary Kirsch
Joshua Lucenti
Kevin Tracy

Tuba

Katherine Bonner

Percussion

Addicus Bagwell
Mallory Bagwell
Joel Glenister
Jeff Polak

Harp

Cristina DeCaprio
Alicia Saunders

Piano

Gary Chapman

WILLIMANTIC ORCHESTRA

David H. Vaughan, Conductor

WINTER CONCERT

3:00 P.M., Sunday, 14 February 2010
Shafer Auditorium, ECSU, Willimantic

PROGRAM

Gustav Holst	“Mars, the Bringer of War” from <i>The Planets</i>
Erik Satie	<i>Deux Gymnopédies</i> I. Lent et grave II. Lent et douloureux
J. S. Bach	<i>Brandenburg Concerto No. 3</i> Allegro – (Adagio) – Allegro
INTERMISSION	
Igor Stravinsky	Suite from <i>L'Oiseau de Feu</i> I. Introduction II. Ronde des Princesses III. Danse Infernale du Roi Katscheï IV. Berceuse et Final

If something is worth doing, it is worth doing badly! *Gustav Holst on amateur performances*

PROGRAM NOTES

“Mars, the Bringer of War” from *The Planets* Gustav Holst (1874–1934)

His Germanic name notwithstanding (his great-grandfather had emigrated to London from Riga in 1799), Holst was thoroughly English. His father, an accomplished pianist and organist, saw to it that young Gustav got a musical education. He received instruction on various instruments before enrolling in the Royal College of Music in 1893 to study composition and trombone. In 1903, after 5 years as an orchestral trombonist, he turned to music education; from 1905 until his death he taught at St. Paul’s Girls’ School, composing on weekends and during school holidays.

Holst achieved renown as a composer in 1918 with the premiere of *The Planets*. He claimed to have been inspired by Arnold Schönberg’s *Five Pieces for Orchestra*—Holst’s original title was *Seven Pieces for Large Orchestra*—although Schönberg’s spare composition was a reaction against the opulent music that Holst and others of his time were writing. Its individual movements are named for seven of the planets, whose mythological or astrological associations inform their musical mood. “Mars, the Bringer of War” (the first to be composed, on the eve of the Great War in 1914) is a ferocious musical portrait of the Roman god of war in 5/4 metre. According to Michael Short (*Gustav Holst*, 1990), “Holst was insistent that *Mars* should be performed at a quick tempo, faster than a normal march, to give an enhanced impression of inhuman and mechanical forces, lurching forward relentlessly and unstoppable; an uncanny premonition of the mechanized warfare of the later twentieth century.”

The great success of *The Planets* was something of a burden for Holst, who wasn’t interested in writing more works of its kind, even if that’s what audiences craved. None of his subsequent compositions excited as much popular interest.

Doux Gymnopédies Erik Satie (1866–1925)

Born in Honfleur at the mouth of the Seine, Satie spent seven years at the Paris Conservatoire as an unwilling piano student (“the laziest student in the Conservatoire,” according to one teacher) before dropping out to lead a Bohemian life in Montmartre, where he supported himself by composing for, and performing at, cabarets. Performances of his early compositions by Maurice Ravel and Claude Debussy in 1912 brought him recognition as a pioneer in musical impressionism. (Sadly, a few years later Satie was to repay Ravel and Debussy for their interest in his works with disdain for theirs.) Collaboration with Jean Cocteau and Pablo Picasso on the avant-garde (anti-)ballet *Parade* (1917) led to commissions for other musical productions—the more shocking, the better.

These serene pieces, written for piano in 1888 and later orchestrated by Debussy, belong to a world quite different from the zany circus of *Parade*, with its Chinese conjurer, gun-toting American Girl, and acrobats. Satie coined the term “gymnopédie” for dance performed by naked boys at festivals in ancient Greece.

Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G J. S. Bach (1685–1750)

Christian Ludwig, Margrave of Brandenburg, is remembered today (if at all) as the dedicatee of Bach’s six Brandenburg concerti, which the composer sent him in 1721 to honor the Margrave’s casual request for some compositions, made when Bach had played for him two years earlier. Ludwig apparently did not think it necessary to thank Bach, let alone pay him anything for the concerti;

he had no orchestra to play them, and Bach was just a lowly musician currying favor (“... I now, according to Your gracious orders, take the liberty of presenting my very humble respect to Your Royal Highness, with the present concertos, which I have written for several instruments, humbly praying You not to judge their imperfection by the severity of the fine and delicate taste that everyone knows You have for music ...”). But at least Ludwig kept the music, perhaps sparing these splendid pieces the fate of other compositions by Bach now lost; it was found during an inventory of Ludwig’s music collection after his death and eventually ended up in the Royal Library in Berlin.

The Brandenburg concerti were probably composed separately prior to 1721 and simply assembled for the Margrave. No. 3 is scored for strings, divided in 3 parts each for violin, viola, and cello/bass. It consists of two fast movements joined by a slow 2-chord measure (probably standing in for some suitable slow movement to be inserted in performance).

Firebird Suite (1919) Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

In 1909, the impresario Sergei Diaghilev invited Stravinsky to compose music for a new ballet based on Russian folk themes for his Paris-based Ballets Russes. Three better-known composers had declined the commission, but Stravinsky jumped at the chance. The production of *L’Oiseau de Feu* (1910) was a popular and critical success, and Stravinsky was suddenly a hot property. Commissions for *Petrushka* (1911) and *Le Sacre du Printemps* (1913) followed. In 1919, Stravinsky rescored selections from *L’Oiseau de Feu* for reduced orchestra; it is this suite that is played today.

The scenario of *L’Oiseau de Feu* is concocted from various Russian folk elements. The firebird is a magical creature, half-woman, half-bird. Here she is captured in the forest by a prince and agrees to help him free a princess from the clutches of the evil monster Kastcheï and his minions. They succeed of course, and the ballet ends with the wedding of prince and princess and a song of thanksgiving.

Toward the end of his life, Stravinsky, “scorning the base degrees by which he did ascend,” disparaged *L’Oiseau de Feu*. Perhaps he was simply weary of the piece, which in one form or another he was called upon to conduct “nearly a thousand times.” But (like Holst) he was probably also annoyed that audiences preferred it and a few other early works to later compositions he considered better. He concurred with Ravel’s suggestion that the ballet’s success owed something to the “musical dullness” of Diaghilev’s previous production: “The Parisian audience wanted a taste of the avant-garde and *The Firebird* was just that—according to Ravel. To this explanation I would add that *The Firebird* belongs to the styles of its time. It is more vigorous than most of the composed folk music of the period, but it is also not very original. These are all good conditions for success.”

Of the music itself he says: “... for me the most striking effect ... was the natural harmonic string glissando near the beginning, which the bass chord touches off like a Catherine’s wheel. ... If an interesting construction exists in *The Firebird*, it will be found in the treatment of intervals, the major and minor thirds in the Berceuse, in the Introduction, in the Kastcheï music. ... Rhythmically, too, the finale might be cited as the first appearance in my music of metrical irregularity—the 7/4 bars divided into 1,2,3;1,2;1,2/1,2;1,2;1,2,3 etc. But that is all.” (*Expositions and developments*, 1962). {Notes by S. K. Lehmann}