

The analysis of "the planets" by gustav holst

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There is more to the galaxy than what meets the eye. The Planets, by Gustav Holst, is a masterful, seven-movement, orchestral suite, written between the years 1914 and 1916. Holst does a fine job launching the suite with the magical movement, Mars: Bringer of War. Later, the artist ends the violence as he introduces, Venus: Bringer of Peace which generates tranquility through a slower tempo.

Uniquely, the fifth element, Saturn: Poor Old Sole sends its listeners on a roller coaster ride using drastic changes throughout. All in all, the seven movements are flawlessly harmonic; however, Mars: Bringer of War and Venus: Bringer of Peace, brilliantly deliver opposing characteristics. Hostility, despair, mayhem, and power all describe the unconventional battle portrayed in, Mars: Bringer of War. The drums and horns begin with a soft, yet steady tempo which illustrates soldiers marching towards bloodshed. Like war, the slow tempo ends abruptly as the full orchestra quickly gears up for the fight.

Meanwhile, Holst thrashes an unforgiving five-beat meter creating a rapid beat throughout. Consequently, the characteristics of the instruments create a very vivid and dark musical tone. Altogether, Mars: The Bringer of War, is a sophisticated representation of war through music. Continuing the journey through the galaxy, Gustav Holst lands on Venus prepared to offer his listeners a calm and heavenly spin. Venus: Bringer of Peace, first comes to life using the melodies of the horns, followed by the inception of the woodwinds, and precedes with the cellos. Notably, the peacefulness is solidified with beautiful solos from a violin trailed by an oboe. Furthermore,

the tempo rests easily on the ears as the rhythm's four-count measure adds to the tranquility.

Accordingly, the instruments, tempo, and rhythm paint a cool, crisp, and blue in color. Overall, Gustav Holst does an outstanding job of portraying peace and harmony with this smooth composition. Two movements in one suite could not be more opposite than Mars: Bringer of War and Venus: Bringer of Peace. An indisputable difference that can be heard between the two pieces is the use of the horns. When Gustav presents the War, the horns hammer the violent rhythm and pitch. On the contrary, the movement that brings peace utilizes the horns to establish a soft pitch with smooth intervals. Equally, another significant variance is that the two movements are played in opposing keys. Keeping with the theme of horror, Mars: Bringer of War, is played in the minor key and Venus: Bringer of Peace, keeps its theme of serenity by using the major key.

Certainly, these explicit features set these two movements apart. Gustav Holst saves the best for last; Neptune: The Mystic is by far my favorite of the seven movements. I particularly love the harmony. Like its name, it is very mysterious and has a way of satisfying my listening ears. Additionally, I was intrigued that Neptune was the only piece the piano was not heard.

Certainly, the piano is essential to the first six movements but, I found its absence in the final movement to be delightful. I appreciate the beautiful melody the harp and strings brought to the piece. Most importantly, it seems that each instrument is given an individual opportunity to stand out. For example, at 43: 42 the oboe can be heard above all others but, not alone.

Finally, Holst puts his final touches on the suite and surprises his audience with an awe-inspiring choir. Neptune: The Mystic disappoints none, as a successful grand finale of an overwhelmingly beautiful seven-movement suite. The Planets does a fine job at properly representing all seven celestial bodies. Whether it was through violent wars, elegant peace, or mysterious melodies, Gustav Holst skillfully employs the full orchestra. This galactic masterpiece will undoubtedly stay alive for centuries to come.