Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
2018-2019 Mellon Grand Classics Season

November 2, 3 and 4, 2018

JOHN STORGÅRDS, CONDUCTOR
WILLIAM CABALLERO, HORN
WOMEN OF THE MENDELSSOHN CHOIR OF PITTSBURGH
MATTHEW MEHAFFEY, DIRECTOR

VÄINÖ RAITIO	*Moonlight on Jupiter*, Opus 24
WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART	Concerto No. 4 in E-flat major for Horn and Orchestra, K. 495 I. Allegro moderato II. Romanza: Andante III. Rondo: Allegro vivace **Mr. Caballero**

Intermission

GUSTAV HOLST	*The Planets*, Opus 32 I. Mars, the Bringer of War II. Venus, the Bringer of Peace III. Mercury, the Winged Messenge IV. Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity V. Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age VI. Uranus, the Magician VII. Neptune, the Mystic (with Women's Chorus) **Women of the Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh**

PROGRAM NOTES BY DR. RICHARD E. RODDA

VÄINÖ RAITIO

Moonlight on Jupiter, Opus 24 (1922-1923)

Väinö Raitio was born in Sortavala, Finland on April 15, 1891, and died in Helsinki on September 10, 1945. Raitio came to prominence in the early 1900's, adding the creative techniques and sensibilities of a new generation of composers to the legacy of Sibelius as Finland's iconic composer. He composed his luminous tone poem *Moonlight on Jupiter* in 1922-1923 after a trip to Moscow, and it was premiered by the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor Robert Kajanus on December 13, 1928. These performances mark the Pittsburgh Symphony premiere of the work. The score calls for piccolo, three flutes, two oboes, English horn, three clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, four trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, two harps, celesta and strings. Performance time: approximately 12 minutes.

Jean Sibelius was the seminal influence on Finland's musical life, regarded not just as the country's greatest and most widely known composer but as an international icon of its spirit, history and people. But Sibelius, born in 1865 and nurtured in 19th-century Romanticism, decided he had said everything he could in his compositions by 1926, so, with the Seventh Symphony, *Tapiola* and the incidental music to *The Tempest*, he not only went into retirement but into virtual seclusion at his home in the vast forests of Finland — Sibelius did not compose a single work during the last thirty years of his life. Among those who came to prominence in Finnish music as the world waited expectantly, but ultimately in vain, for Sibelius' "Eighth Symphony" was Väinö Raitio, who brought to the legacy of Sibelius the creative techniques and sensibilities of a new generation.

Raitio was born in 1891 in the isolated village of Sortavala on the north shore of Lake Lagoda, now in the Russian province of Karelia, and studied at the Helsinki Conservatory (1911–1916), privately in Moscow with Alexander Ilyinsky (1916–1917), and at the Church Music Institute in Helsinki (1922-1923). Raitio's 1916 graduation concert from the Helsinki Conservatory — which included a violin sonata, a piano concerto and the *Poem* for Cello and Orchestra — was performed by the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra led by Robert Kajanus, Finland's foremost conductor and a champion of Sibelius, and introduced his compositions to Finnish music lovers. Modernistic elements entered Raitio's compositions in the 1920s after his study in Moscow (the harmonic opulence of Scriabin), a 1921 visit to Berlin (German Expressionism), and hearing Debussy (French Impressionism) performed by the Helsinki Philharmonic, most notably in his series of colorful, ambitious orchestral tone poems. Some of those pieces were heard at performances in Helsinki but earned little money, so in 1926 he took a teaching position at the Music Institute in the coastal town of Vyborg, midway between Helsinki and St. Petersburg. He stayed there until 1932, after which he lived as a freelance composer, receiving support from an occasional performance, government grants, writing music reviews for two theater magazines in the late 1930s, and his wife's income as a dentist. Raitio devoted most of the 1930s to writing five operas and a ballet; three of the operas were performed in Helsinki during his lifetime but none was published. During his last years, when he was already suffering from the cancer that would end his life in 1945, he composed several small orchestral works commissioned by the Finnish Radio Orchestra. The Väinö Raitio Society was founded in Helsinki in 1991 in observance of the composer's birth centenary and its advocacy bore fruit soon thereafter with several performances and a number of recordings of his works for large and small orchestral that spurred a wider interest in one of Finland's most distinctive creative voices.

Hildur Raitio, the composer's wife, said that the luminous tone poem *Moonlight on Jupiter* (its visionary title could well have been inspired by Scriabin; the piece was begun soon after Raitio returned from Moscow) was "based on a strange dream in which he travelled in space and saw seven of the moons of Jupiter." Raitio himself offered a more prosaic background for the piece: "I dedicate this tone poem to my cat to honor the memory of a beloved family member. I sent him to Jupiter in October 1922."

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Concerto No. 4 in E-flat major for Horn and Orchestra, K. 495 (1786)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in Salzburg on January 27, 1756, and died in Vienna on December 5, 1791. He composed his Fourth Horn Concerto in 1786 for friend and horn player Joseph Leutgeb, for whom he also wrote the Concert Rondo (K. 371), the Quintet for Horn and Strings (K. 407) and first three Horn Concertos (K. 412, 417, and 447). These performances mark the Pittsburgh Symphony subscription premiere of the Fourth Horn Concerto. The score calls for two oboes, two horns and strings. Performance time: approximately 16 minutes.

Mozart completed this delightful work for the horn player Joseph Leutgeb on June 26, 1786. Their relationship may be surmised from the following jocular dedication on the manuscript of the Third Horn Concerto: "Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart has taken pity on Leutgeb, ass, ox and simpleton, Vienna, May 27, 1783." Leutgeb was an old friend of the Mozart family from Salzburg, where he was a colleague of Wolfgang and his father, Leopold, in the orchestra of Archbishop Colloredo. Leutgeb played well enough to tour successfully through Germany, France and Italy performing his own Horn Concerto. In 1777, he settled in Vienna but, finding it impossible to make a living from music, purchased from his wife's family a cheesemonger's shop with the help of a loan from Leopold Mozart. (When Leopold saw Leutgeb's tiny establishment, he quipped that it was "the size of a snail shell.") Wolfgang moved to Vienna in 1781, and he and Leutgeb again fell into the easy friendship of their Salzburg days. It was for this pal that he wrote the Concert Rondo (K. 371), the Quintet for Horn and Strings (K. 407) and the four Horn Concertos (K. 412, 417, 447 and 495). The nature of the relationship between the two musicians may be surmised from the mock dedication quoted above. In the K. 495 Concerto, Mozart used four colors of ink in the solo part to confuse Leutgeb; K. 412 was peppered with such good-natured insults as "Take courage," "You ass" and "Thank heavens, that's enough." They must have had a merry time together, but there was also a deep, mutual concern. When the horn player-cheese maker fell behind in his loan payments, Wolfgang defended his friend to his straight-laced father. Mozart knew well from personal experience the problems of the debtor. Things apparently went well for Leutgeb in later years, however, and he died in prosperity in 1811.

The Horn Concerto No. 4 is in the traditional three movements. The opening movement is a sonata-concerto form in the "singing allegro" style that Mozart learned while still in knee pants from John Christian Bach, the youngest son of Johann Sebastian, who had settled in London and met the touring Mozarts there when Wolfgang was only eight. The generally sunny optimism of the first movement is clouded by some Romantic harmonies in the development section. The recapitulation presents swift and challenging passages to the soloist in which Mozart, with an almost devilish glee, must have pressed Leutgeb to the limits of his technique. The second movement, titled "Romanza," is a lovely song that utilizes the burnished sonority of the solo horn. Its lyrical theme, presented immediately by the soloist, returns twice after intervening episodes. The second episode, like the middle of the preceding movement, is touched with the hint of dark emotionalism that pressed on so many of the works Mozart wrote during his last five years. The finale, brimming with high spirits and bounding energy, is a rondo in the swinging, 6/8 meter hunting-horn style that recalls the distant ancestors of the concert instrument. Never was a friendship immortalized in music of greater charm and geniality.

GUSTAV HOLST

The Planets, Opus 32 (1914-1917)

Gustav Holst was born in Cheltenham on September 21, 1874, and died in London on May 24, 1934. He composed *The Planets* from 1914-1917, originally for two pianos and later orchestrated with the help of Nora Day and Vally Lasker, two of the composer's fellow faculty members at St. Paul's School in London, due to advanced arthritis in his hands. *The Planets* was premiered in London by the Queen's Hall Orchestra with Adrian Boult conducting on September 29, 1918. The Pittsburgh Symphony first performed the work at Syria Mosque with conductor John Pritchard in February 1964, and most recently performed it with music director Manfred Honeck in February 2014. The score calls for two piccolos, four flutes, bass flute, three oboes, English horn, bass oboe, three clarinets, bass clarinet, three bassoons, contrabassoon, six horns, four trumpets, three trombones, tenor and bass tubas, two sets of timpani, percussion, celesta, xylophone, two harps, organ, strings and female choir. Performance time: approximately 52 minutes.

From early in his life, Gustav Holst combined a mystical turn of mind with strong nationalistic sympathies, and much of his music shows an intriguing blend of no-nonsense British vigor and ethereal rumination. He was fascinated by Eastern religious literature, and undertook a study of Sanskrit so that he could translate hymns from the *Rig Veda* for himself in order to make the most appropriate musical settings for them. The *Japanese Suite*, the opera *Savitri* (meant to recreate the suspended stillness of Indian music), songs based on the poems of the New England Transcendentalists and other such visionary works are scattered among lusty pieces chock full of hearty folk songs and rousing choruses. Holst, however, took the trouble to note the difference between the Mystic and the Artist: "I suggest that the latter has the advantage. He has no need of speech; he has something at once more tangible and yet which belongs to eternity — that something which Artists call Form." His dear friend and mutual critic, composer Ralph Vaughan Williams, believed that "Holst's music reaches into the unknown, but it never loses touch with humanity." These two attractive, but seemingly opposed, characteristics — head in the clouds, feet on the ground — are abundantly manifest in *The Planets*.

Holst's interest in writing a piece of music on the attributes of the astrological signs was apparently spurred by his visit in the spring of 1913 with the writer and avid star-gazer Clifford Bax, who noted that Holst was himself "a skilled reader of horoscopes." Of the music's inspiration, Holst noted, "As a rule I only study things which suggest music to me. That's why one time I worried at Sanskrit. Then recently the character of each planet suggested lots to me, and I have been studying astrology fairly closely." Despite his immediate attraction to the planets as the subject for a musical work, however, he took some time before beginning actual composition. He once wrote to William Gillies Whittaker, "Never compose anything unless the *not* composing of it becomes a positive nuisance to you," and it was not until the summer of 1914, more than a full year after he had conceived the piece, that he could no longer resist the lure of *The Planets*.

"Once he had taken the underlying idea from astrology, he let the music have its way with him," reported Imogen Holst of her father's writing *The Planets*. The composition of the work occupied him for over three years. *Jupiter*, *Venus* and *Mars* were written in 1914 (prophetically, *Mars, the Bringer of War* was completed only weeks before the assassination at Sarajevo precipitated the start of the First World War); *Saturn*, *Uranus* and *Neptune* followed in 1915, and *Mercury* a year after that. Except for *Neptune*, all the movements were originally written for two pianos rather than directly into orchestral score, probably because Holst was then having painful problems with his writing hand due to severe arthritis. For the mystical *Neptune* movement, he considered the percussive sounds of the piano too harsh, and wrote it first as an organ piece. All seven movements were orchestrated in 1917 with the help of Nora Day and Vally Lasker, two of the composer's fellow faculty members at St. Paul's School in London, who wrote out the full score from Holst's keyboard notations under his guidance.

Holst gave the following explanation of *The Planets* for its first performances: "These pieces were suggested by the astrological significance of the planets. There is no program music in them, neither have they any connection with the deities of classical mythology bearing the same names. If any guide to the music is required, the subtitle to each piece will be found sufficient, especially if it is used in a broad sense. For instance, *Jupiter* brings jollity in the normal sense, and also the more ceremonial kind of rejoicing associated with religious or national festivities. *Saturn* brings not only physical decay, but also a vision of fulfillment."

The individual movements of *The Planets* employ a wide spectrum of musical styles in which the influences of Stravinsky, Dukas, Debussy and even Schoenberg may be discerned, but, according to Imogen, "*The Planets* is written in Holst's own language." It is a language of spectacular variety — a greater contrast than that between the first two movements is hard to imagine. The staggering hammerblows of *Mars, the Bringer of War* are followed by the sweet luminosity of *Venus, the Bringer of Peace*. Each of the remaining movements cuts as distinctive a figure as the first two. *Mercury, the Winged Messenger* is a nimble scherzo that seems, like the fast movements of Baroque music, to be a stream of notes spinning infinitely through the cosmos of which the composer has revealed only a small segment. Within *Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity* co-exist a boisterous Bacchanalian dance ("the most joyous jangle imaginable," according to Richard Capell) and a striding hymn tune to which Elgar stood godfather. Hard upon *Jupiter*, which reportedly inspired the charwomen cleaning the hall during rehearsals for the premiere to toss away their mops and dance a little jig, follow the lugubrious solemnities of *Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age*, the movement Holst declared to be his favorite piece in the suite. This music is invested with a weighty, Mahlerian seriousness that recalls *Das Lied von der Erde*. *Uranus, the Magician* is shown as a rather portly prestidigitator who includes perhaps more broad humor than baffling legerdemain in his act. The haunting finale, *Neptune, the Mystic*, springs from the misty domain of

Debussy's *Nocturnes*, but possesses an even wispier, more diaphanous orchestral sonority, with the disembodied siren song of the female chorus floating away to inaudibility among the spheres at its close.