



## PROGRAM NOTES

About *Where We See The Stars And Mars*: This music, with its verse-like title, may evoke memories of gazing into a clear nighttime sky from a vantage point away from lights and noise, enjoying a peaceful solitude and contemplating the beauty and vastness of the heavens, feeling part of something beyond our transient existence. As a human activity, viewing the stars at night is something most of us cannot take for granted the way our ancestors did, and is a special experience reserved for mountain vacations and camping trips. Being able to go somewhere to see the stars is therefore an infrequent pleasure, a cherished moment.

However, it is natural, when “Mars” is invoked in music, to make a connection to the Roman origin of the name, i.e. the god of war, and its astrological implications. But, unlike the British composer Gustav Holst, for instance, I’m no astrologer. In my experience (and in the experience of most, I’d wager), Mars is but one more star in the night sky, one of the very few easily recognized as a planet by its pink-orange color, and the only one that I have seen up close, thanks to thousands of images from the ongoing Mars exploration missions. Knowing how impossibly distant most stars are, and then seeing our neighbor Mars among them, makes it seem reassuringly close. RS

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Almost 50 years to the day after his death, Igor Stravinsky (June 5, 1882—April 6, 1971) remains known as the 20th century's greatest and most important composer. He explored and embraced many diverse musical voices, contributing significant and often masterful works across a wide range of styles. Tonight the HSO presents a handful of short but bracing works.

The *Fanfare for a New Theatre*, not even a minute long, is a brief masterclass in on high modernism, Stravinsky-style. It is nothing more than a 5-note motif and nine rapidly expanding and contracting variations, utilizing inversions, retrograde inversions, augmentation, and construction techniques distributed between two virtuoso voices.

Originally composed for two pianos, *Suite No.1 for Small Orchestra* shows the versatility of the language Stravinsky used in landmark works like *L'Histoire du soldat* and *Octet for Wind Instruments*. The suite consists of a quartet of contrasting dance movements, with a pavane-like "Andante", a tarantella-styled "Napolitana", flamenco guitars in "Española", and a return to his Russian origins with "Balalaïka". RS

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Dmitri Shostakovich's *Suite for Variety Orchestra* is a compilation of eight dance movements that were mostly composed for theatre and films. For years the suite was misidentified as the lost work *Jazz Suite No.2*, and commercially recorded several times by that title. However, even as popular western styles sometimes go through transformations on their way east, any audience will hear that none of the movements have anything to do with jazz. Rather, they are easily identified with stylized European dance movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries: waltzes, polkas, and marches.

Once the score of the "real" *Jazz Suite No.2* was discovered during the late 1990's, this work was retitled *Suite for Variety Orchestra*, reflecting its instrumentation of a Russified pops orchestra, including parts for accordion and electric guitar. Shostakovich specified that the suite may be played in any order, and that not all the movements need be performed.

Placing an exact date on the *Suite for Variety Orchestra* is not straightforward. "Waltz No.2" is from the film *The First Echelon* (1956), so it could not have been assembled prior to that date. The "March" and "Finale" come from the 1940 slapstick comedy short *The Adventures of Korzinkina* (which may be viewed on YouTube!). Several of the movements left unplayed tonight are from various ballets Shostakovich wrote between 1930 and 1955.

All of the pieces seem to have been reorchestrated and rearranged from their original settings. "Waltz No.2", for instance, is nostalgic and suitably folksy in the Soviet-made film *The First Echelon*, but is—ironically— grand and passionate in the suite. Perhaps the transformation from proletarian to bourgeois style was not unintended by the composer, whom it has been suggested occasionally included subtly subversive messaging in his music.

The suite was first performed in the west in 1988 under the baton of Mstislav Rostropovich (using the erroneous title). Since then, "Waltz No. 2," has emerged as Shostakovich's best-known piece, through its inclusion in the soundtrack to several western motion pictures, television shows, and commercials. RS

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Approximately one third of Mozart’s total symphonic output was generated in just two years between 1772–1774. One of the most interesting and polished symphonies emanating from fertile two-year period was **Symphony No. 29, K. 201**. On every count, it is a fine specimen of gallant writing: well bred, charming, polite and faithful to the Viennese classical model. Its light-hearted charm and elegance intends a work which is truly meant to entertain and delight.

The first movement, allegro moderato, begins softly introducing the first main theme immediately. The tune is catchy, marked by an octave drop and pulsing repeated notes. That opening idea rises sequentially by step, as if making certain that we do not miss the point. Horns and oboes later join with an expanded repetition. A lyrical second theme is sung by the violins. The very small development (approximately thirty measures) follows before a standard, literal recapitulation with a coda finishes the movement.

An elegant Andante concerns itself with a delicate theme spun by muted violins. Edward Downs commented, “It is full of eighteenth century clichés and turns that were used a hundred times before and after by other composers, but here they are so spontaneous and lovely that each phrase bears repeating and repeating. And still the movement seems too short.” The form is tri-partite with the opening theme returning in the last part with increased violin embroidery.

The fourth movement recalls the first theme of the first movement with its distinctive octave-drop profile. Another theme is typically galant, filled with decorative trills and grace notes. Mozart creates an informal fun-loving atmosphere (complete with hunting calls), spending more time on the development than in the first movement, thereby adding more weight to this final section. Overall, the music remains elegant and cheerful until the close.

Notes excerpted from: Marianne Williams Tobias  
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