

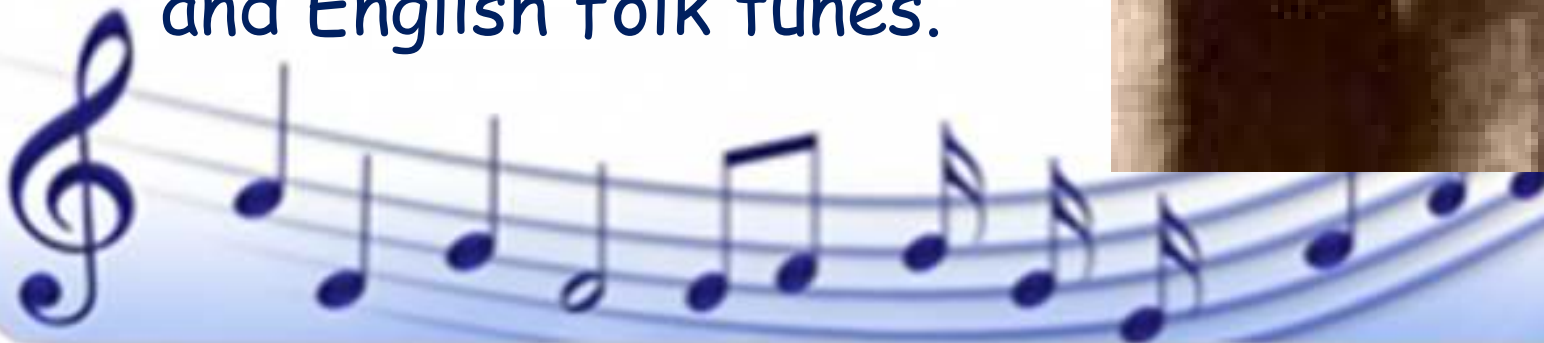


# The Planets Suite

Gustav Holst  
1874 - 1934

## Learn about a famous composer's life

- Gustav Holst was an English composer and music teacher for over 20 years.
- Most of the music he composed was original, but he had influences from Hindu spiritualism and English folk tunes.



## Learn about a famous composer's life

As a child, Gustav was taught the piano and violin.



This is Holst's piano. You can see it in the Holst Birthplace Museum. He composed *The Planets* on this piano.

This is Holst playing the violin.



## Learn about a famous composer's life

Unfortunately, Holst also had pain in his hands, so it made practising the piano very difficult and painful.

After leaving school, he got his first job as an organist and choirmaster.



## Learn about a famous composer's life

He became a student at the Royal College of Music, where he studied composition.

Unfortunately, the pain in his right hand became worse. Playing for a long time was impossible and he had to accept that he would never be a professional concert pianist.



## Learn about a famous composer's life

- Holst wrote The Planets Suite between 1914 and 1916.
- Each of the seven movements is named after a planet of the Solar System and its corresponding astrological character.



## Learn about a famous composer's life

1. Mars - the Bringer of War
2. Venus - the Bringer of Peace
3. Mercury - the Winged Messenger
4. Jupiter - the Bringer of Jollity
5. Saturn - the Bringer of Old Age
6. Uranus - the Magician
7. Neptune - the Mystic



## IAL about a famous composer's life

Holst did not compose a piece of music about Pluto, as Pluto was not discovered until 1930.

Colin Matthews, a recent composer created a piece of music called Pluto: the Renewer. This is sometimes played alongside Holst's Planet Suite in concerts.





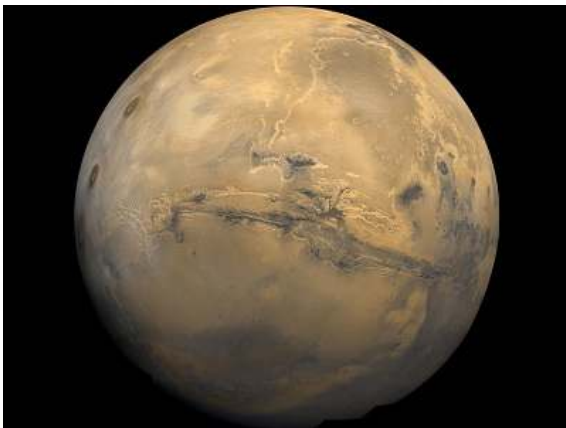


# Mars

The Bringer of War

# IAL how a stringed instrument works

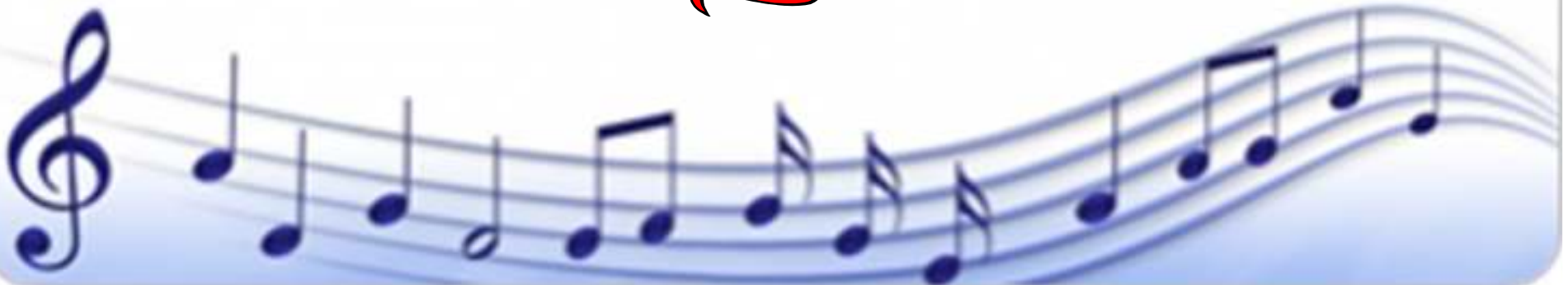
Mars is the Roman god of war and bloodshed, whose symbol is a spear and shield.



# IAL how a stringed instrument works

Watch video clip: [Watch Mars here](#)

While you listen, draw a picture of how the music makes you feel.



# IAL how a stringed instrument works

In this piece of music, you hear a lot of string or bowed instruments.



# THE STRING FAMILY



**GUITAR**



**BANJO**



**VIOLIN**



**VIOLA**



**DOUBLE  
BASS**



**ELECTRIC  
GUITAR**



**CELLO**

[www.thebirdfeednyc.com](http://www.thebirdfeednyc.com)





Venus

The Bringer of Peace

# What is timbre?

Venus was the Roman goddess of love and beauty.



[Watch Venus here](#)



# What is timbre?

Venus was written to be the opposite to the music of Mars.

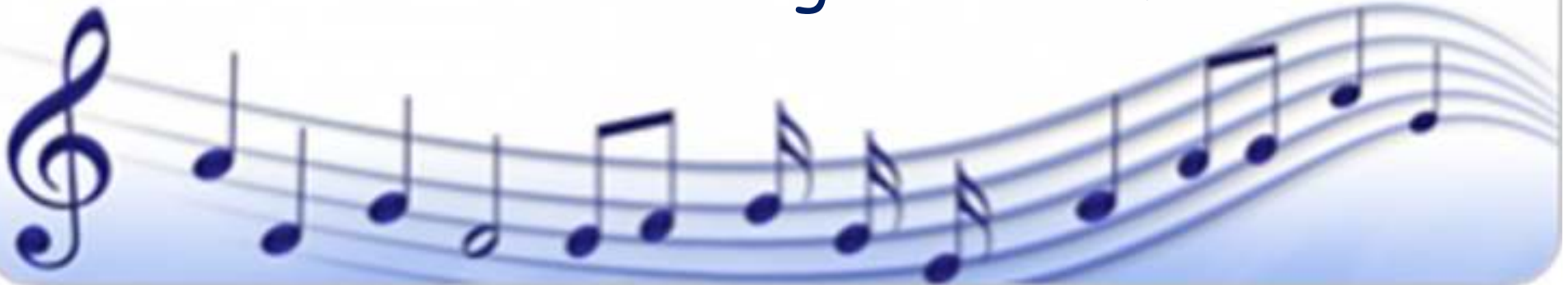
Mars used very loud instruments such as *con legno* strings and brass. He therefore chose different instruments for Venus.





# What is timbre?

- The timbre in music is the distinctive quality of a sound or instrument. This is why you can sometimes recognise certain instruments in a piece of music.
- Holst decided that Venus should have a peaceful and soft timbre, in contrast to the harsh booming timbre of Mars.



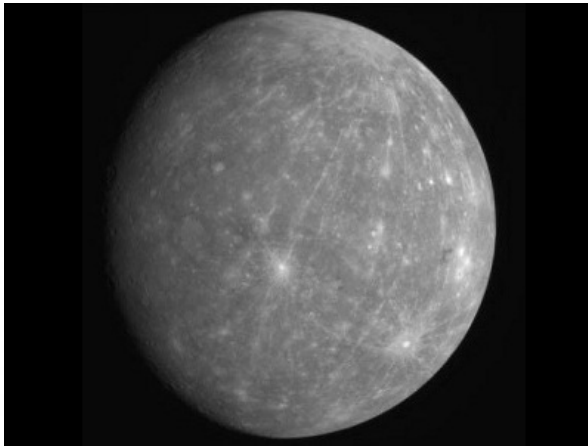


Mercury

The Winged Messenger

## How a woodwind instrument works?

Mercury was the messenger-god of Jupiter, the god of games, business and story-telling.



[Watch Mercury here](#)



## How a woodwind instrument works?

Mercury, the winged messenger has been described as flitting about, not unlike a cosmic butterfly.

*What instruments can you hear?*

*How can you tell?*



## How a woodwind instrument works?

- Mercury consists of mainly woodwind instruments, that pass from one to another.
- Woodwind is the section of the orchestra that makes a noise when breath is blown along it. Woodwind instruments are virtually straight, and are made of wood or plastic with some metal.



# THE WOODWIND FAMILY

**CLARINET**



**OBOE**



**FLUTE**



**SAXOPHONE**



**BASSOON**





# Jupiter

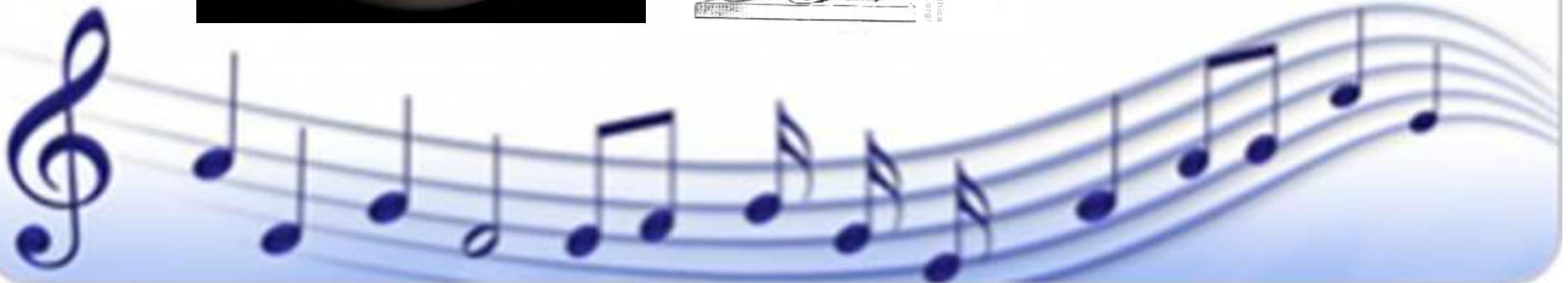
The Bringer of Jollity

In Roman mythology, Jupiter was the king of heaven and Earth, and of all the Olympian gods.



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGMLnr\\_khUM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGMLnr_khUM)

Watch Jupiter here





- The music to Jupiter the Bringer of Jollity has been used many times in recent English history.
- It was used as the tune to a very famous English poem, 'I vow to thee my country', which is now what it is most well-known for. Christians often sing it as a hymn in church.



- The first verse of I vow to thee my country was played at the wedding of Prince Charles and Princess Diana in 1982.
- The second verse was played at Princess Diana's funeral in 1997.
- It is also used for the 'World in Union', the theme to the Rugby World Cup.

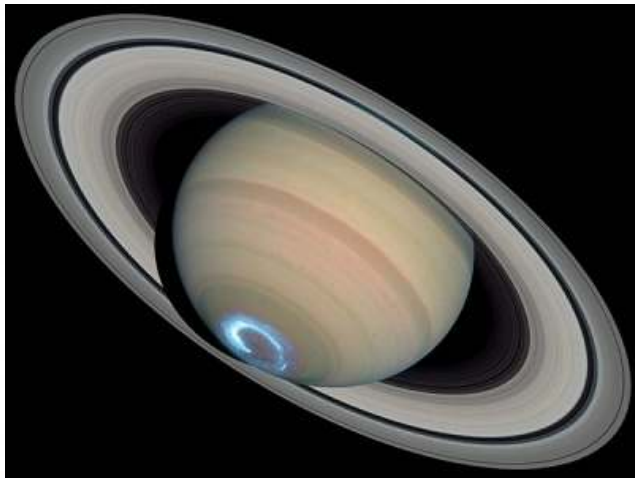




# Saturn

The Bringer of Old Age

In Roman mythology, Saturn is the god of agriculture.



[Watch Saturn here](#)



## IALT understand how music can show the passing of time

- After all the excitement of Jupiter, Holst decides to change the mood.
- Saturn becomes a slow march, showing time going on, or someone or something ageing.



A blue planet with a ring system, Uranus, is centered in the image. The planet is a pale cyan color with some darker blue and greenish patches. It is surrounded by a thin, white ring system. The background is a dark, starry space with many small white stars and some faint nebulae. The text "Uranus" is written in a large, blue, outlined font across the middle of the planet. Below it, the text "The Magician" is written in a smaller, blue, outlined font.

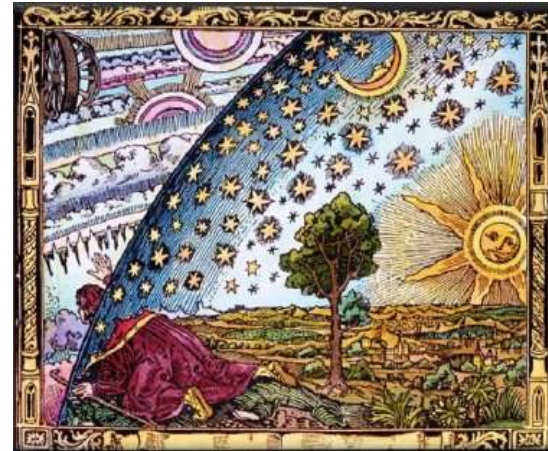
Uranus

The Magician

Uranus was the first ruler of the universe and the god of the sky. He was the husband of Gaea, the goddess of the earth.



[Watch Uranus here](#)



- Holst used a pattern called a **motif** or **motive** throughout Uranus.
- It is used like a repeating pattern in a story, and helps to join different sections of a piece of music together.
- Uranus has a 4-note motif. Different instruments play this motif throughout the piece.



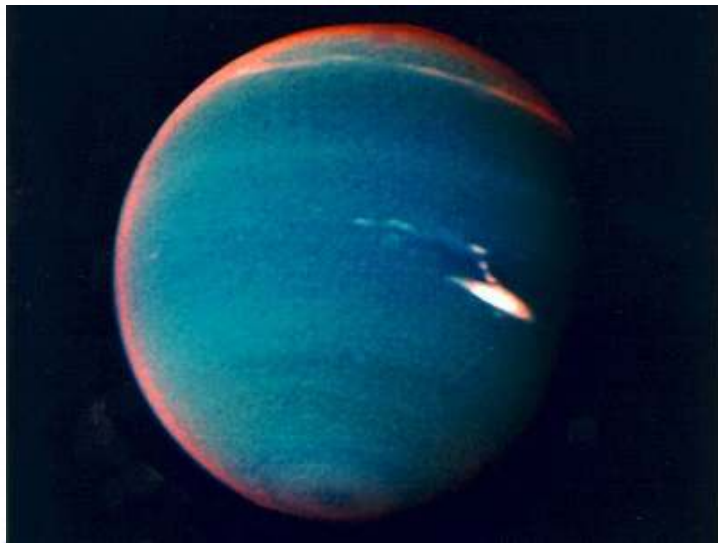




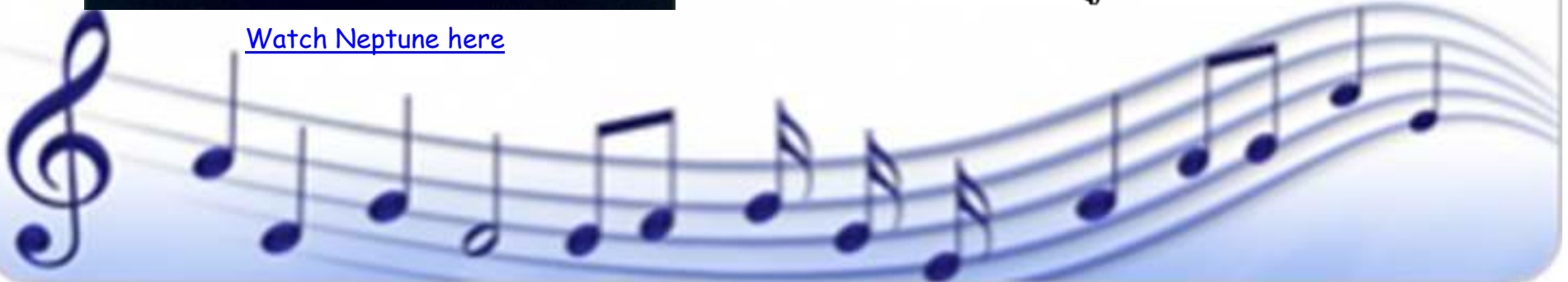
# Neptune

The Mystic

In Roman mythology, Neptune was the god of the water and the Sea.



[Watch Neptune here](#)



- Neptune was one of the first pieces of orchestral music to have a fade-out ending.
- Fading is a way to reduce the sound, so the music doesn't just end.
- Holst wanted Neptune "to be repeated until the sound is lost in the distance. So there was no difference between sound and silence."

