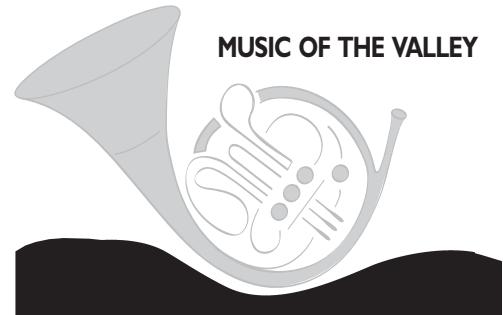


# Livermore-Amador Symphony

Arthur P. Barnes, Music Director & Conductor

May 14, 2011, 8 p.m.

Bankhead Theater, Livermore



## Holst's *Planets* and Dale Wolford

Prelude Talk at 7 p.m. by Peter Curzon, LAS percussionist/music committee member, and Dale Wolford, saxophonist

**Poet and Peasant Overture**  
(1846)

Franz von Suppé  
(1819–1895)

**Vocalise**  
Opus 34 (1912)

Sergei Rachmaninoff  
(1873–1943)

Dale Wolford, soprano saxophone

**Fantasia for Saxophone and Chamber Orchestra**  
(1948)

Heitor Villa-Lobos  
(1887–1959)

Dale Wolford, soprano saxophone

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### INTERMISSION

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Presentation of student awards by LAS Association president Ron White

**The Planets**  
Opus 32 (1916)

Gustav Holst  
(1874–1934)

- I. Mars, the Bringer of War
- II. Venus, the Bringer of Peace
- III. Mercury, the Winged Messenger
- IV. Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity
- V. Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age
- VI. Uranus, the Magician
- VII. Neptune, the Mystic

with the Monte Vista High School Women's Ensemble—Bruce Koliha, director

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\* Student recipient of a scholarship from the LAS youth outreach program

## **Poet and Peasant Overture (1846)**

Franz von Suppé, one of the pioneers of Viennese operetta, was actually born in Dalmatia (in what is now Croatia)—to be precise, aboard a ship in the harbor of Spalato (now Split)—in 1819. Christened with the most impressive name of Francesco Ezechiele Ermenegildo Cavaliere Suppé-Demelli, he was the son of a Belgian father and an Austrian mother who, when widowed, returned with her young son to her native Vienna. There Francesco germanized his name and took up music seriously, having abandoned the earlier study of law.

Success came early to Suppé, with a string of successful stage productions, including 20 operettas in five years. But whereas many of the operettas of Johann Strauss, Jr.; Franz Lehar; and Sigmund Romberg continue to hold the stage today, those of Suppé have sunk virtually without a trace. What remains, however, is a string of delightful overtures that have become staples in the symphonic repertoire, including the overtures to *The Beautiful Galatea*, *Donna Juanita*, *Boccaccio*, *Pique Dame*, and *The Light Cavalry*.

Among the most popular is the overture to *Poet and Peasant* (*Dichter und Bauern*), composed in 1846 not for one of his own operettas but as incidental music to a play by a colleague named Elmar. So popular did this overture become that it has been published in nearly 40 arrangements. The centerpiece of the overture is a famous syncopated string melody that is repeated with emphasis to close the piece.

## **Vocalise Opus 34 (1912)**

Sergei Rachmaninoff was born into a wealthy Russian family with a country estate, but he was not destined to enjoy the life of the landed gentry. His father, a retired army officer, lost the entire family fortune through disastrous financial ventures and subsequently deserted the family. Rachmaninoff's cousin Aleksandr Siloti, a well-known concert pianist and conductor, recognized his considerable musical abilities and arranged for Rachmaninoff to study piano with the noted teacher and pianist Nikolay Zverev in Moscow. Under Zverev's strict tutelage, Rachmaninoff gradually grew into one of the greatest piano virtuosos of his time. Later he studied music at the Moscow Conservatory, graduating at the age of 19 and winning a gold medal for his one-act opera *Aleko*.

Despite his considerable abilities as both a composer and a pianist, the young Rachmaninoff was continually plagued by self-doubt and depression. Following the failure of his First Symphony in March 1897 and an unhappy love affair, he sought treatment from psychiatrist Nikolay Dahl, who is often credited with restoring his self-confidence, which enabled him to write the Second Piano Concerto. Around the same time, he married his cousin Natalie Satin.

By 1905 Rachmaninoff had established an international reputation as a pianist and composer and held an appointment as a conductor at the Bolshoi Ballet. He was clearly worried by the revolutionary fervor that was spreading through Russia, however, and in 1906 he moved with his family to Dresden, where he enjoyed one of the most fertile periods of his creative life. He returned to Moscow in 1910, but when the revolution finally came, in 1917, he left Russia forever, making his home in the United States.

During the last 25 years of his life, he continued to give piano recitals but otherwise became rather reclusive. He never learned to speak English fluently and lived primarily with his immediate family and a small circle of friends. Despite failing health, he embarked on an arduous concert tour in the winter of 1942–43, donating all the proceeds to war relief. After performing on February 15, he became seriously ill and died in Beverly Hills on March 28.

The “Vocalise” was originally written around 1912 and published as the last of a set of 14 songs. The first 13 songs were set to poems written by Russian Romantic poets. In contrast, the “Vocalise” was written without words, relying entirely on the beauty of the melodic line. It quickly became the most successful song of the set and has remained one of Rachmaninoff’s most popular compositions. Rachmaninoff revised it in 1915 and made several arrangements, including ones for solo piano, violin and piano, and orchestra. Other arrangers have created versions for many other instrumental combinations, including piano duet, cello, and clarinet.

## **Franz von Suppé (1819–1895)**

## **Fantasia for Saxophone and Chamber Orchestra (1948)**

## **Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887–1959)**

Heitor Villa-Lobos was born on March 5, 1887, in the Laranjeiras (Orange Groves) section of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Nicknamed Tuhú as a child, Villa-Lobos was one of eight children born to Raul Villa-Lobos and Dona Noémia Umbelina Santos Monteiro Villa-Lobos. Raul earned his living working in the National Library. Biographer David P. Appleby describes the father as “...a man of conservative political views and great intellectual curiosity. He wrote several books on various subjects under the pseudonym Epaminondas Vilalba, had a keen eye for drawing portrait sketches, and was a fine amateur cellist. Soon aware that Tuhú had a precocious musical talent, he personally undertook the boy’s instruction in ear training and on the cello.”

At age 18, Heitor left Rio de Janeiro and began a six-year journey, traveling to some of the most remote parts of his country. His travels were interrupted only in 1907–08, when he returned to Rio to attend the National Institute of Music. He left after only a few months, preferring his own study of Brazilian folk and popular music to the formal training he was receiving at the institute. He was most interested in the music of northeastern Brazil, and this style influenced the writing of many of his later compositions.

Villa-Lobos’ first European trip was in 1923. On May 30, 1924, he presented a concert of his works at the Salle de Agriculteurs in Paris. This concert was well received by the audience and critics alike. Villa-Lobos remained centered in Paris from 1923 to 1930, with several trips back to South America as well as to such musical centers as Amsterdam, Berlin, Brussels, Lisbon, London, Madrid, and Vienna. He quickly became an international musical figure.

When one thinks of soprano saxophone, the first classical piece that comes to mind is Villa-Lobos’ “Fantasia for Saxophone and Chamber Orchestra.” This work, written in 1948 for the French virtuoso Marcel Mule, stands as the cornerstone of the rather limited repertoire for soprano saxophone. It is, without a doubt, the most popular piece for this member of the saxophone family.

The year 1948 was an interesting one for Villa-Lobos. He was admitted to New York’s Sloan-Kettering Memorial Hospital, was diagnosed with bladder cancer, and subsequently underwent an operation. In that year, he wrote four works for voice and piano, a concerto for piano and orchestra, and the “Fantasia.” It seems remarkable that Villa-Lobos would create a work for the seldom-heard soprano saxophone, especially considering that he had no premiere planned or even a formal commitment from Mule. The premiere of the work took place in Rio de Janeiro on November 17, 1951, with Waldemar Szilman as soloist and Villa-Lobos conducting.

## **The Planets Opus 32 (1916)**

## **Gustav Holst (1874–1934)**

Born in Cheltenham, England, in 1874, Gustav Holst served as an organist and choirmaster in Gloucestershire, until neuritis in his right hand forced him to stop playing organ. Instead of giving up music entirely, he turned to the trombone and composition. Holst studied composition at the Royal College of Music, where he would go on to teach for a few years. In October 1905, he was appointed as the director of music at the St. Paul’s Girl’s School in Hammersmith, near London, where he worked until his death, in 1934, while simultaneously holding other positions and teaching evening adult classes.

Despite the arduous workload at St Paul’s, Holst managed to compose a large body of music. He never begrimed the hours unavailable for composition, though, stating: “In spite of the obvious drawbacks of having to teach six hundred girls every week, I consider that I have learnt as much through my school teaching as I did as a trombone player in the...orchestra.”

Holst composed choral works, opera, and more, but it was the orchestral suite *The Planets* that made him famous overnight. This spectacular and colorful work has influenced generations of film score composers. The seven-part suite was written between 1914 and 1917. Each movement describes the astrological and mythological associations of the seven planets. (Earth is excluded, and Pluto, no longer classified as a planet, was not discovered until 1930.) Holst was introduced to the study of astrology by a friend and became skilled in

the reading of horoscopes. This interest suggested to Holst the astrological qualities of the planets and provided a scheme for an extended orchestral suite. The first performance was on November 15, 1920.

Holst was most dismayed by the international popularity of *The Planets*, his only composition to reach such a wide audience. He thought it very atypical of his compositional style and regretted having written it. It is sad that such a great work of art, beloved the world over, was resented by its own creator. Ralph Vaughan Williams, Holst's best friend and fellow composer, once said *The Planets* was "the perfect equilibrium" of Holst's nature—the melodic, precise, and structured combined with the mystic and unexplainable.

### Mars, the Bringer of War

This movement has an aggressive character manifested in the low, menacing melody and the anxiously repeating pattern in 5/4 time, which evokes the martial rhythm of field drums. Generous use of brass instruments amplifies the militaristic tone. A great discord eventually brings the onslaught of battle to a temporary halt. A slower section is haunted by the martial rhythm before the allegro returns with increased, almost hysterical, ferocity that ends with grinding chords.

### Venus, the Bringer of Peace

This movement begins with a horn call answered by soft flutes in the cool high register, a Holst trademark. With the undulating chords for strings and the melodic violin solo, Venus has an unmistakable air of remote calm. Utter serenity prevails, yet this movement is not without interesting melody or musical content. It is quite lovely, and the fact that it follows violent and thunderous Mars only serves to highlight the contrast.

### Mercury, the Winged Messenger

Holst described this movement as "the symbol of mind." It is the shortest and most quirky of the movements, and he composed it last. The music is a fleet scherzo, vivace, full of rhythmic tricks, as the messenger of the gods, with his winged helmet and heels, flits here and there.

### Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity

This is perhaps the best known and most popular of all the movements. It has an overall air of grand importance, and the jolly feel is highlighted by its C major key. The whole movement sounds exhilarating, bringing the sense of joy that was in the composer's mind when he wrote it. The glorious ballad section in the middle suggests a typically English scene and has inspired many patriotic hymns in both England and America.

### Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age

This adagio movement memorizes the figure who is usually depicted as carrying in one hand an hourglass in which the sands of time are running out and in the other hand the scythe of the Grim Reaper. "Saturn brings not only physical decay," Holst insisted, "but also a vision of fulfillment." Holst's Saturn is serene and deliberate as well as accepting. This movement is said to have been Holst's favorite.

### Uranus, the Magician

This movement depicts a distant and obscure but lively figure, as is evident in this energetic vivace. Uranus is eccentric, beginning with the huge trombone and trumpet opening. He becomes merry in the manner of a sorcerer after the loud and unusually minor-sounding beginning.

### Neptune, the Mystic

The composition ends with "Neptune, the Mystic" (not the typical representation of the sea god), set in the irregular meter of five beats per measure that was used in the first movement, with the tempo now andante and the overall effect quiet and somehow distant. Neptune is characterized by ethereal, floating, celestial harmonies, with a wordless, contemplative accompaniment of a women's chorus interjecting a delicate melody, an unusual ending for this powerful suite.

*Program notes compiled by Jeff Pelletier  
Program booklet edited by Eva Langfeldt*

## STUDENT AWARDS

Each year up to four graduating high school seniors are presented with an award from funds administered by the Symphony Association. Chosen from a group of outstanding applicants, each has made significant contributions to school and community musical activities.

### JOHN H. GREEN MEMORIAL AWARD

*This award is given in memory of John H. Green,  
son of the late Tot and John W. Green.*

Violinist **Laura Schildbach** is the recipient of the John H. Green Memorial Award. She has been concertmaster of the Livermore High School orchestra and has played violin in LAS plus the pit orchestras for Tri-Valley Repertory Theatre and Valley Dance Theatre for four years. She has also performed with church and chamber music groups and honors ensembles and has taught several private violin students. Laura studied piano with Christa Even and violin with Rodin Akerman and for the past two years has been studying violin with David Ryther. President of the Tri-M Music Honor Society at LHS, she started chapters of that society at Granada High and in Livermore's middle schools. She presented assemblies at Livermore's elementary schools to encourage children to enjoy and participate in lifelong musical activities. Laura plans to attend Chapman University and major in music education and performance. Eventually she would like to play in a professional string quartet and open a music studio.

### BILL KING MEMORIAL AWARD

*The award is given in memory of Bill King,  
son of Jean and Walter King, who loved music and played cello  
and trombone at Jackson and East Avenue Middle Schools.*

This year's Bill King Memorial Award goes to cellist **Bronwyn Hagerty**. Bronwyn has been a command-performance soloist at the Livermore School District's annual Solo and Ensemble Festival for each of the past seven years. She played in LAS for two years and in 2008–09 was a winner of the LAS Competition for Young Musicians. For the past two years, she has played in the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra. She is active with the Tri-M Music Honor Society at Livermore High School, serving as secretary last year and vice president this year. The several chamber music ensembles in which she plays have performed at benefit concerts and other community events. She studies cello with Jill Brindel and also teaches cello. Bronwyn will attend the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington, to study with David Requiero and major in cello performance.

### SYMPHONY ASSOCIATION AWARDS

*Each year the Livermore-Amador Symphony Association  
gives one or two awards to high school seniors  
in recognition of their musicianship and musical contributions  
to their school and community.*

**Curtis Kim**, another cellist, receives one of the LAS Association Awards. A student at Foothill High School, he has been principal cellist in the Foothill orchestra all four years. Curtis was a winner of the LAS Competition for Young Musicians in 2009–10. He has performed as soloist for seasonal concerts and has organized ensembles for school and community events. Curtis has received many academic and musical awards and honors, including being a soloist at Carnegie Hall and having life membership in the California Scholarship Foundation. He is a cello student of Jihee Kim. For the future, Curtis states, "I aspire to become a pediatrician who uses music therapy in my medical practice to alleviate patients' stress and help them adjust to the hospital."

Dublin High School violinist **Michelle Lee** is selected to receive the other LAS Association Award. Michelle was a winner of the LAS Competition for Young Musicians in 2007–08 and has continued to be selected to perform solos with other orchestras, including a solo appearance with the Boston Pops Orchestra for National Public Radio's "From The Top" program. She has played in the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra for the past four years and has served as its co-concertmaster. She studies violin with Ian Swensen at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and piano with Ju-Yi Peng. Michelle will attend Harvard University to earn a degree in instrumental performance.

## 2011–2012 COMPETITION FOR YOUNG MUSICIANS

October 2, 2011: Recordings due  
October 23, 2011: Competition

## DALE WOLFORD Saxophone Soloist

Dale Wolford has been hailed by critics nationwide for his "great sound and phrasing...the melodic lines soulfully tear at your heartstrings" (*Saxophone Journal*) and playing that is "fresh and expressive, with genuine impulses of feeling" (*San Francisco Chronicle*). A 1973-74 winner of the Symphony's Competition for Young Musicians, he is excited to return for this, his third, performance with the orchestra.

Wolford is currently a member of the Premiere Saxophone Quartet, dedicated to promoting new music for saxophone quartet via performances and recordings. He has also performed and/or recorded with Philip Glass, Bernadette Peters, Santa Cruz New Music Works, the Morosco Saxophone Quartet, the San Francisco Saxophone Quartet, and the Nuclear Whales Saxophone Orchestra. He has performed in the San Francisco and San Jose Symphonies and as a soloist with the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra. Working with pianist Ivan Rosenblum for

over 20 years as the Wolford/Rosenblum Duo, Wolford has premiered many new works, including the Sonata for Saxophone and Piano by Gunther Schuller. The Duo has released two compact discs, including *Laughter and Tears—A Jewish Saga* on the Centaur label.

He has a Bachelor of Music degree in saxophone performance from San José State University and a Master of Arts degree in saxophone performance from California State University, Hayward.

A faculty member at San José State University and the University of California, Berkeley, Wolford is a Yamaha Performing Artist.



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Renew season tickets this evening, and receive a rose. Forms for renewal are available in the lobby.

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