

JOHN SYKES

THE PLANETS

**Suite for Male Voices,
Piano and Percussion**

**To the memory of GUSTAV HOLST,
to the programme and sequence of whose most
brilliant and imaginative orchestral suite, The Planets,
I am most obviously indebted.**

**The JOHN SYKES PROJECT
MMXVIII**

John Austin Sykes (1909 – 1962)



John Sykes was born in India in 1909 - in India because his father was in the Indian civil service. Back in England he won a music scholarship to Clifton College, Bristol, and whilst still a schoolboy gained his A.R.C.O. and F.R.C.O. In 1928 he went up to Oxford as organ scholar at Balliol. In those days, undergraduates were not able to read Music as a first degree, so Sykes read Modern History, and followed it up with a B.Mus. One contemporary source considered him to have been the most distinguished musical undergraduate of his time. He was president of the famous Oxford University Opera Club and active in the Music Club and Union. He was sufficiently important to be given a full-page spread in the undergraduate newspaper 'Isis' – which referred to his ability to 'make a piano do anything but swim'. He was a friend of the left-wing poet Randall Swingler, and also a contemporary of W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender and C. Day Lewis, whom he knew, so it is perhaps not surprising that he was a fluent, though not distinguished, poet. After Oxford, he went to London, to the Royal College of Music, where he studied composition under Ralph Vaughan Williams, R. O. Morris and Gordon Jacob. In 1936 he was appointed to the staff of Kingswood School, and there he stayed, except for war service, until he died of cancer in the school Sanatorium in the summer term of 1962.

The John Sykes Project is an informal group of former pupils who are transcribing and publishing his music on the internet, and encouraging its performance.

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The Planets

I. Mars, the Bringer of War

John Sykes

Moderato

Tenors *f* See where he strides the shatt-ered

Basses *f* See where he strides the shatt-ered

Piano *f pesante* *f*

Side Drum *sf sf sf sf sf sf sf sf sf sf*

Cymbals *sf* (let vibrate)

Bass Drum *f pesante*

Timpani Timp in C & E *f* *tr* *f*

cit-ies. Mars, the great God, the God of War.

cit-ies. Mars, the great God, the God of War.

tr

7

Mars, the terr ib - le God, the God of Batt - les.

Mars, the terr ib - le God, the God of Batt - les.

[Long Pause]

10

Flame red his eye and his breath hiss-es on and scorch - es the earth.

Flame red his eye and his breath hiss-es on and scorch - es the earth.

A

Change C to B

13 *f* B *mp*³

Mars, the de-destroy - er, the Drag-on God, whose word is fear_ who

Mars, the de-destroy - er, the Drag-on God, whose word is fear_ who

f B *mp*

17 *cresc.* *cresc. molto*

circ-les the writhing earth like a winding ser-pent, twist-ing it a-wry, and rack-ing it through and through._

circ-les the writhing earth like a winding ser-pent, twist-ing it a-wry, and rack-ing it through and through._

cresc. *cresc. molto*

cresc. *cresc. molto*

cresc. *cresc. molto*

cresc. *cresc. molto*

20

f

See where he strides, in his hands a load-ed weap-on of fur-ious fi-ery de-

f

See where he strides, in his hands a load-ed weap-on of fur-ious fi-ery de-

f

f

f

f

f

Change B to C

23

ff

struct-ion Mars, the God of War

ff

struct-ion Mars, the God of War

f

ff

fff

f

ff

ff

f

ff

ff

Change C to B for II

II. Venus, the Bringer of Peace

Andante moderato

T. *mp*
Fair is the sum-mer night, and fair-est of all_ is the

B. *mp*
Fair is the sum-mer night, and fair-est of all_ is the

Pno. *p dolce* *mp* *legato*

[S.D. Cymbals & B.D. tacent]

Timpani Timp. in B & E

34

8 *mf* *p*
stead-fast light of Ven-us, the brin-ger of peace, most bright, — most bright of all the stars,

8 *mf* *p*
stead-fast light of Ven-us, the brin-ger of peace, most bright, — most bright of all the stars,

sf *p*

6
40

mp *cresc.* *mf* *cresc. f* *dim.*

Gi-ver of love's de-vine de - light — Se - rene - ly glow - ing in the sum - mernight, ser -

mp *cresc.* *mf* *cresc. f* *dim.*

Gi-ver of love's de-vine de - light — Se - rene - ly glow - ing in the sum - mernight, ser -

mp *cresc.* *mp* *p* *mf*

46

A

ene-ly glow-ing in the sum-mer night. Dark is the

ene-ly glow-ing in the sum-mer night. Dark is the win-ter dawn, And

mf *mf*

A

mp *p* *p* *sf* *mf*

54

win-ter dawn, and storms have scoured the town. Has Ve - nus, the bring-er of peace, with-drawn her

storms have scoured man's wind-swept town. — Has Ven - us the bring-er of peace, with - drawn her gleam-ing

f *dim.* *f* *dim.*

f *mf* *dim.*

59

torch? Are her shut-ters down? *p* No, no thank the *ff*

torch? Are her shut-ters down? *p* No, no thank the *ff*

p *cresc.* *f* *ff* *f*

p *f* *ff*



64

heav-ens, her heal - ing love's_ not flown. *f* *mf*

heav-ens, her heal - ing love's not flown. *f* *mf*

f *mf* *f* *p*

III. Mercury, the Winged Messenger

Allegro vivace

T.

B.

Pno. *f brillante*

S. D.

Cym.

B. D.

Timpani *Timp in C & E*

80

f Ho! There! Catch him, Man. *mf* Catch him if you can. *mf* You, in your jet plane, You in your rock-et ship,

f Ho! There! Catch him, Man. *mf* Catch him if you can. *mf* You, in your jet plane, You in your rock-et ship,

sf

sf

sf [short]

sf

91

8 You, in your shin - ing cars cel - est - ial, fast - er thansound or light or thought, just you try to catch him in your

You, in your shin - ing cars cel - est - ial, fast - er thansound or light or thought, just you try to catch him in your

A

101

8 grip. But Merc-ur-y's too fly, — he'll not be caught. Be - sides, he's the mess-eng-er of the Gods — *ff*

grip. But Merc-ur-y's too fly, — he'll not be caught. Be - sides, he's the mess-eng-er of the Gods! — *ff*

A

111

f *ff*

— And on him, if it came to it, I'd lay_ all the odds in a race_____ with Man._____

— And on him, if it came to it, I'd lay_ all the odds in a race_____ with Man._____

f *ff*

f *mf* *f* *ff*



120

So catch him if you can._____

So catch him if you can._____

ff

ff

ff *ff* *ff* *ff*

This musical score page contains four systems of staves. The first system consists of two blank staves, one for the treble clef and one for the bass clef. The second system is a grand staff with two bass clefs. The upper bass staff contains a melodic line with a *cresc.* marking and a *ff* dynamic. The lower bass staff contains a rhythmic accompaniment. The third system features three staves: the top staff has a melodic line with a *f* dynamic and a *sf* dynamic, while the two staves below it are mostly blank with some rhythmic notation. The fourth system consists of two blank staves, one for the treble clef and one for the bass clef.

IV. Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity

Con moto

T. There's Jup - it - er, he's rudd-y and heart - y. There's

B. There's Jup - it - er, he's rudd-y and heart - y. There's

Con moto

Pno. *f*

S. D. *mf* *sf* *mf*

Cym.

B. D. *mf*

Timpani *mf*

Timp. in B \flat & E \flat

138

Jup - it - er the soul of the part - y. He's all for feast-ing and laugh-ter and jest - ing, And

Jup - it - er the soul of the part - y. He's all for feast-ing and laugh-ter and jest - ing, And

sf *mf* *sf* *mf*

142

mf

danc-ing and sing-ing and merr-y bells ring - ing. He's care-less and reck-less and thrift-less and feck-less. He re-els all day and all

danc-ing and sing-ing and merr-y bells ring - ing. He's care-less and reck-less and thrift-less and feck-less. He re-els all day and all

mf *mf*

sf *mf* *sf*

f



147

cresc.

A

ff

f

night, _____ till the dawn's _____ in sight! But gold is his rug-ged

cresc.

ff

f

night, _____ till the dawn's _____ night in sight! But gold is his rug-ged

A

cresc. *ff* *f* *sf*

f *ff* *mf* *sf* *mf* *ff* *f*

f *f*

heart. And I'll praise with my ut-most art This Jup - it - er, most gall - ant of Gods, — This Jup - it - er, most joll - y of



Gods. — This gi - ant - heart - ed roll - ick - ing Jup - it - er, who knows no

Gods. — This gi - ant - heart - ed roll - ick - ing Jup - it - er, who knows no

163

poco rit.

care nor fear

care nor fear

poco rit.

ff

ff

The musical score consists of four systems. The first system shows the vocal line in treble and bass clefs with the lyrics 'care nor fear'. The second system shows the piano accompaniment in treble and bass clefs, featuring a melodic line in the right hand and a rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. The third system shows a drum part with a snare drum line and a bass drum line. The fourth system shows a bass line in the bass clef. Dynamics include 'poco rit.' and 'ff'.

V. Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age

[Percussion tacet]

Moderato *p* (*sotto voce*)

T. Time moves on and on and on, and

B. Time moves on and on and on, and

Moderato
molto legato
pp

Pno.

176 *mp*

8 chilled is the blood and cold the moon. Grey - haired Sat - urn sits in his chair and

chilled is the blood and cold the moon. Grey - haired Sat - urn sits in his chair and

mp

184 *p* *mf* **A**

8 broods a - lone in the wintr - y air. Time moves on and on and on and

broods a - lone in the wintr - y air. Time moves on and on and on and

p *mf* **A**

192

chilled is the blood_ and cold_ the moon. Grey-haired Sat - urn sits in his chair and

chilled is the blood_ and cold_ the moon. Grey- haired_ Sat - urn__ sits in his chair_ and

f

mp

200

broods_ a - lone_ in the wint'r - - - - y

broods_ a - lone_ in the wint'r - - - - y

p

f dim.

p

207

air.

air.

pp

pp

ppp

smorzando

VI. Uranus, the Magician

Scherzando

T. _____

B. _____

Pno. *p* _____ *f* _____ *sf* _____ *sf* _____ *sf* _____

S. D. *p* _____ *p* _____

Cym. _____

B. D. _____

Timpani Timp. in B & E _____ *mp* _____

221

mp _____ *mf* _____

He's up to his us - ual tricks, — Turn-ing dead stones and sticks — In-to toads and snakes and

mp _____ *mf* _____

He's up to his us - ual tricks, — Turn-ing dead stones and sticks — In-to toads and snakes and

p _____ *sf* _____ *mp* _____ *mf* _____

sf _____ *sf* _____ *p* _____

sf _____

228

cresc.

f

A

newts and liz-ards and creat - ures with the odd - est giz- zards.

cresc.

f

newts and liz-ards and creat - ures with the odd - est giz- zards.

A

cresc.

sf

p

mf

p

234

mp

He'll give you a charm for you

mp

He'll give you a charm for you

f

sf

sf

sf

p

sf

mp

p

f

f

f

f

mp

sf

tr

241

warts — And cure you at once if you're out of sorts with simp-les and cunn-ing in-cant-at-ions, spells and weird-ly brewed pot -

warts — And cure you at once if you're out of sorts with simp-les and cunn-ing in-cant-at-ions, spells and weird-ly brewed pot -

mf sf

p sf



248

B

at-ions.

at-ions.

B

p f sf sf

p

254

f
O - ho! _____ O - ho! _____ Now he's off to the moon. _____

f
O - ho! _____ O - ho! _____ Now he's off to the moon. _____

gliss.

sf sf sf sff f

f sf sf sf

f sff



261

f
But

f
But

ff f pesante

f f

f

cresc. *ff*

he'll be back a-gain ver - y soon.

cresc. *ff*

he'll be back a-gain ver - y soon.

cresc. *ff* *ff*

Ped.

f *ff* *ff* *ff*

f *ff*

VII. Neptune, The Mystic

Sostenuto: non troppo lento *sotto voce pp*

T. On the lone - ly prow of our fin-ite thought

B. *sotto voce pp*
On the lone - ly prow of our fin-ite thought

Sostenuto: non troppo lento *pp*

Pno. *(quasi pizzicato)*

[S.D. tacet]

Cym.

B. D. *ppp*

Timpani Timp in B & E

277

Nep-tune stands The old world shrinks to a fog-bound nought. But Lo! new lands dim-ly e-merge like

Nep-tune stands The old world shrinks to a fog-bound nought. But Lo! new lands dim-ly e-merge like

A

ice-bergs in the gloom be-yond our fin-ite thought. On the shroud-ed shore be-yond all thought,

ice-bergs in the gloom be-yond our fin-ite thought. On the shroud-ed shore be-yond all thought,

pp p poco pesante cresc.

p cresc.

ppp cresc. poco a poco

Nep tune stands; Rocks, sail-ors long have sought, His out-stretched hands Grasp with tri ump-ant vi-gour, on that

Nep tune stands; Rocks, sail-ors long have sought, His out-stretched hands Grasp with tri ump-ant vi-gour, on that

f ff

f ff sf sf

(tr) f ff

292 *dim.* *mf* *pp*

shore, that shore be yond our fin-ite thought. —

dim. *mf* *pp*

shore, that shore be-yond our fin-ite thought. —

sf *dim.* *mf* *dim. molto. . . pp* *morendo* *ppp*

(quasi pizz.)

sf sf p

sf sf ppp

tr *tr*

dim. *p*

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