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ATLANTA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA EMBARKS ON HOLST'S SONIC VOYAGE *THE PLANETS*

Featuring ASO principal percussionist Joseph Petrasek in *Losing Earth* by Adam Schoenberg

ATLANTA – Conductor Gemma New returns to Atlanta Symphony Hall to lead the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO) in an interstellar program of works inspired by our planet and solar system, featuring Holst's *The Planets*, on Thursday and Saturday, February 1 and 3 at 8:00 pm at Atlanta Symphony Hall.

British composer Gustav Holst's mythical masterpiece *The Planets* presents each planet personified as its astrological character. The final movement of this dramatic nod to the wonders of the night sky features the University of Georgia Hodgson Singers, directed by Daniel Bara, and the Georgia State University Singers, directed by Deanna Joseph.

ASO principal percussionist Joseph Petrasek takes the stage in Adam Schoenberg's *Losing Earth* (2019), exploring the world's oldest musical instruments in an evocative call for global healing.

"When I was first commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony to write this piece, I began to think about the history of percussion and how it can be traced back to the beginning of time," wrote Schoenberg. "This instrument has watched the earth endure all its phases, including the devastation that is now beginning to emerge because of global warming. *Losing Earth* pays homage to this history."

The concerts open with Salina Fisher's colorful *Rainphrase*, a 2015 work from the award-winning composer from New Zealand that showcases the rhythmic power of the Orchestra's percussion section. Fisher wrote, "For quite some time, the beauty and chaos of Wellington rain has inspired me to respond musically. My orchestral work *Rainphrase* draws on characteristics of water as rain: its shape and shapelessness, transparency and density, energy and calm, and its capacity for reflection in both a literal and emotional sense."

CALENDAR LISTING

The Planets

Thursday, February 1, 2024, 8pm

Saturday, February 3, 2024, 8pm

Gemma New

Joseph Petrasek, percussion

University of Georgia Hodgson Singers

Georgia State University Singers

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

SALINA FISHER: *Rainphrase*

ADAM SCHOENBERG: *Losing Earth*

HOLST: *The Planets*

Gemma New returns as guest conductor for Gustav Holst's off-world delight *The Planets*. Based on astrology, this irresistible concert suite enchanted audiences at its 1918 debut and has inspired spin-offs ever since, from church singing to *Star Wars*. Also, on the concert, planet Earth makes a dazzling appearance alongside the ASO percussion section in Salina Fisher's beautifully atmospheric opener *Rainphrase*. And Adam Schoenberg makes a plea for planetary healing in his 2019 piece *Losing Earth*, which explores the world's oldest musical instruments (after the voice) with ASO Principal Percussionist Joseph Petrasek.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Gemma New, conductor

Sought after for her insightful interpretations and dynamic presence, New Zealand-born Gemma New is the Artistic Advisor and Principal Conductor of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and Music Director of Canada's Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra. New is the recipient of the prestigious 2021 Sir Georg Solti Conducting Award.

During her 2023/24 season, New makes subscription debuts with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Vancouver Symphony, and Orchestre National de France. North American returns include Atlanta Symphony, Seattle Symphony, and Orchestre symphonique de Montréal. Continually in demand in Europe, New makes her debut with the Bamberger Symphoniker as well as conducting the Malmö Symphony Orchestra, Orquesta Sinfónica de Barcelona y Nacional de Cataluña, Orquesta Nacional de España, Orchestre de l'Opéra de Rouen-Normandie, Orchestre National Bordeaux Aquitaine and Staatsorchester Hannover.

New served for four seasons as Principal Guest Conductor of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, and she served as Resident Conductor of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and Associate Conductor of the New Jersey Symphony. A former Dudamel Conducting Fellow with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Conducting Fellow at Tanglewood Music Center, she was awarded Solti Foundation U.S. Career Assistance Awards in 2017, 2019 and 2020, before receiving the 2021 Sir Georg Solti Conducting Award.

Joseph Petrasek, percussion

Joseph Petrasek was appointed Principal Percussionist of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra in 2017, and Principal Percussionist of the Colorado Music Festival in 2019. Previously, he served as Associate Principal Percussionist of the Kansas City Symphony for eight seasons, and as a percussion fellow in the New World Symphony in Miami Beach, Florida.

Joseph has appeared as Guest Principal with the San Francisco Symphony, and has also performed with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, The Cleveland Orchestra, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Mr. Petrasek is also on the percussion faculty at the University of Miami Frost School of Music.

Originally from Southern California, Joseph earned his bachelor's degree at UCLA studying under Mitchell Peters, former Timpanist of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. He went on to receive a master's degree at Temple University, studying with Philadelphia Orchestra percussionists Alan Abel and Angela Zator-Nelson. Mr. Petrasek lives in Atlanta with his wife, Jessica, and their daughter, Sophia. He enjoys cooking and learning about wine.

THE GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY SINGERS

The international award-winning Georgia State University Singers is the School of Music's premier vocal ensemble. Selected by competitive audition, the choir represents the diverse population of Georgia State. In May of 2017, the University Singers won first place in the renowned Marktoberdorf International Chamber Choir Competition during a tour of Austria and Germany. In May of 2013, the University Singers competed in La Florilège Vocal de Tours where they placed second overall in the mixed choir category.

The choir's first professional recording, *Evening Hymn* (Gothic Records), is available on iTunes, Amazon and wherever CD's are sold. The ensemble's invited performances include appearances before the Georgia Music Educators Association, American Choral Directors Association and at the Georgia Music Hall of Fame Awards.

Members of the GSU University Singers have been featured on *The Walking Dead* and the ensemble has performed with Andrea Bocelli. Additional tours have taken them throughout much of the United States, including Carnegie Hall on two occasions and six international tours with stops in France, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Italy, Yugoslavia, Finland, Russian Estonia, Canada and Great Britain.

THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA HODGSON SINGERS

The international award-winning Hodgson Singers is UGA's premiere choral ensemble made up of many of the university's most talented and dedicated singers. Students are eligible for membership in Hodgson Singers only after participating in one of the other UGA choral ensembles for at least one semester and passing a thorough audition process.

In 2014, the UGA Hodgson Singers won the prestigious International Choral Competition Ave Verum in Baden, Austria. The choir took "Grand Prix Ave Verum," the competition's top prize, out of 10 selected choirs from the US, Italy, Hungary, Ukraine, Czech Republic, Austria, and the Philippines. Judges were from Austria, Finland, Germany, Spain, and the US.

The Hodgson Singers is primarily made up of advanced undergraduate and graduate student singers, under the direction of Dr. Daniel Bara.

About the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

Under the leadership of Music Director Nathalie Stutzmann, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO) offers live performances, media initiatives, and learning programs that unite, educate and enrich our community through the engaging and transformative power of orchestral music experiences. The ASO engages the diverse international community of our city, bringing people together in harmony—including our youngest citizens, with extensive opportunities for youth and families to fall in love with music. Two of the hallmark education programs celebrate anniversaries this season: the Atlanta Youth Symphony Orchestra celebrates 50 years and the Talent Development Program turns 30.

The Orchestra's range and depth are featured in more than 150 concerts each year, including the flagship Delta Classical Series, Movies in Concert, Family Concerts, Coca-Cola Holiday series, and many community and education concerts. In addition, the ASO presents many vibrant, wide-ranging events and artists through its Delta Atlanta Symphony Hall Live presentations. The ASO also performs with the ASO Chorus, originally founded by Robert Shaw, and currently under the direction of Norman Mackenzie. The Chorus is featured on nine of the ASO's 27 Grammy® Award-winning recordings.

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