

British music for piano duo



Holst:
The Planets

original two-piano version

Holst:
Elegy (in Memoriam William Morris)
Elgar:
Serenade in E minor
Bainton:
Miniature Suite
Bury:
Prelude and Fugue in E flat



Goldstone and Clemmow

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Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

Serenade in E minor, Op. 20 – the composer's own version for piano duet

1	I.	<i>Allegro piacevole</i>	2.53
2	II.	<i>Larghetto</i>	4.49
3	III.	<i>Allegretto –Tempo primo</i>	2.20

Frank Bury (1910-1944)

Prelude and Fugue in E flat major – for two pianos

4	Prelude	2.08
5	Fugue	3.09

Edgar Bainton (1880-1956)

Miniature Suite – for piano duet

6	I.	Minuet	1.05
7	II.	Barcarolle	2.06
8	III.	English Dance	1.13

Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

9	Elegy (In Memoriam William Morris)	8.30
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From Symphony in F ('The Cotswolds') – the composer's own version for two pianos

The Planets – the composer's original version for two pianos

10	I.	Mars, The Bringer of War	6.12
11	II.	Venus, The Bringer of Peace	7.06
12	III.	Mercury, The Winged Messenger	3.46
13	IV.	Jupiter, The Bringer of Jollity	7.37
14	V.	Saturn, The Bringer of Old Age	8.41
15	VI.	Uranus, The Magician	5.14
16	VII.	Neptune, The Mystic	6.23

total CD duration 74.29

Of the four most treasured English composers of the late nineteenth /early twentieth centuries, three, including the two represented on this recording (the others being Vaughan Williams and Delius), had some roots across the sea to the north and east. Delius' father was a German cotton magnate; the grandfather of Gustavus Theodore von Holst (he became plain Gustav Holst in 1918) was a Latvian composer with Scandinavian ancestors and German cousins; and the name Elgar is probably a form of the Scandinavian Aelfgar (fairy spear). But England is nothing if not cosmopolitan.

The existence of **Edward Elgar's** own piano duet version of his *Serenade* in E minor for string orchestra seems to have escaped the notice of even some Elgar experts, but in fact both versions were published in Leipzig in 1893, the year after the original composition. He was an accomplished pianist and wrote beautifully for the instrument, notably of course in the late chamber works – the Violin Sonata and the Quintet for piano and strings, but also in the highly virtuosic Concert Allegro for solo piano and the equally difficult piano solo version of the *Enigma* Variations (given its recording première by Anthony Goldstone on Elgar's own piano on a Cobbe Foundation/National Trust CD) – again contemporaneous with the orchestral version.

The composer Thomas Dunhill, in his book on Elgar, related that the latter had a special affection for the *Serenade* and said in 1904 that he had never written anything better. This was after *Enigma*, *Gerontius* and *The Apostles*! In three short movements, it combines infectious charm and pathos in the first and third with deep intensity in the central *Larghetto*. The skipping opening movement, though only about three minutes long, is actually in near-textbook miniature sonata form, introducing – as Mozart did – new material in the development. Elgar unexpectedly returns to this new material to round off the third movement, which until then had had the character of an intermezzo in G major, and in this way cunningly transforms it into a finale.

Frank Bury was born in Shropshire in 1910. After reading music at Cambridge University he went on to the Royal College of Music in London, where he studied conducting with that fine Holstian Malcolm Sargent and composition with Gordon Jacob, who served on the musical staff of Morley College under Holst's music directorship and taught Holst's composer daughter Imogen. Thereafter both of Bury's interests developed side by side – he received further tuition in Salzburg from Bruno Walter, worked at Glyndebourne and founded and conducted the Ludlow Choral Society, for which he is remembered with affection; during those years he composed works for various forces, both instrumental and vocal. The life of this gifted musician came to a premature end in 1944 when, as a commando, he was killed during the airborne landings in Normandy.

The present work, written – one assumes – in the mid to late nineteen thirties, contrasts a touching pastoral prelude containing truly poignant harmonies and eloquent modulations with a fugue based on a rising, optimistic subject, almost Handelian in character. Though essentially diatonic and conventional in form this fugue offers the listener many striking features, including changing bar-lengths, cross-rhythms, ostinato pedals imitating timpani, surprising turns of harmony and the occasional excursion into bitonality and the whole-tone scale. A powerful climax of organ-like sonority concludes the piece. Caroline Clemmow and Anthony Goldstone gave the first documented public performance in 1987, appropriately in Shropshire, and Goldstone edited it for publication by Roberton Publications. This is the first recording of any work by this fine composer, who unhappily was not destined to fulfil his gifts.

In March 1911 *Musical Opinion* carried probably the first ever appreciation of the music of Gustav von Holst, written by **Edgar L. Bainton**, a thirty-one-year-old London-born composer who had overlapped with Holst at the Royal College of Music (to which, unlike Holst, he had won an open scholarship at his first attempt at the age of only sixteen); they both studied with Stanford. Deploring Holst's lack of recognition he heaped praise upon him, homing in particularly on the Indian-inspired works. Bainton was himself to complete in 1927 his own Indian opera *The Pearl Tree* of which, when it was at last staged – triumphantly – in Sydney in 1944, Neville Cardus would write “...as sustained a succession of beautiful sound as any I have heard since I attended an opera by Richard Strauss.” Bainton's early Wagnerian leanings, also shared with Holst, led in 1907 to a huge choral symphony, *Before Sunrise*, which put him on the map with an award from the Carnegie U.K. Trust in 1917, the year that Vaughan Williams' London Symphony received a similar award; but this enthusiasm unfortunately resulted in his arrest on the way to the Bayreuth Festival in 1914 and internment in a prison camp for four and a half years, time which he put to selfless and outstandingly productive musical use in the service of his fellow prisoners.

A prolific composer (celebrated, at the Three Choir Festivals for example, in the twenties but later unjustly neglected in Britain: “a composer who should have taken a more prominent position than he has” – Henry Wood, writing in 1938), he was also an inspirational teacher, especially in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and then in Sydney, to where he emigrated with his family in 1934 (the year of the deaths of Holst and Elgar, another composer with whom he felt a close affinity), to become Director of the N.S.W. State Conservatorium. A far cry from Wagner, the delightful *Miniature Suite* (1922) for piano duet speaks for itself, demonstrating a warm, unassuming nature and a quirkily melodious style.

During **Gustav Holst's** student years a literary and debating society was formed at the Royal College, and Holst and his friend Vaughan Williams became avid participants. Thomas Dunhill kept the minutes. Along with debates on such topics as “academic training should be abolished”, the men (for ladies were not admitted) explored various current literary and philosophical subjects, including “the socialism of William Morris”. Holst was very much influenced by this writer and artist (1834-1896), hearing him lecture at his house to the Hammersmith Socialist Society, which Holst joined. There, as conductor of the Hammersmith Socialist Choir, he met his future wife, one of the sopranos. He set several poems by Morris to music and the ideals which Morris upheld, of honest craftsmanship and the accessibility of art for everyone, remained crucial to him. Morley College, where he became Director of Music, was founded on these principles, and his own music retained as much contact as possible with the “common man” as listener and executant, without compromising its quality.

When writing his Symphony in F major entitled “The Cotswolds” (he was born and raised in Cheltenham) in 1899-1900, Holst dedicated the elegiac second movement to the memory of his hero. The complete four-movement work was performed by Dan Godfrey and the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra in 1902 but the performance was ill-prepared and the symphony has fallen from the repertoire. However in the Elegy the composer's great admiration for Morris brought forth a deeply felt tribute and Colin Matthews has prepared a modern performing edition of this movement. Holst's own two-piano version of the symphony is unpublished at the time of writing, but the Elegy suffers no loss of gravity or impact in this form. The mournful, dignified processional at times breaks into strong, impassioned declamation – a tomb monument built of sound, one might say – before coming sadly to rest.

It would be difficult to name a large-scale orchestral work by a British composer with more widespread and lasting popularity than Holst's suite *The Planets*. Surprisingly, though, it was performed in its *original* form, for two pianos, before the public heard it with orchestra. Holst was Director of Music at St. Paul's Girls' School in Hammersmith, West London, for nearly thirty years – from 1905

until the year of his death; two pianist colleagues, Vally Lasker and Nora Day, would play through his newly written music for him as well as helping by writing out orchestral scores, a task which was particularly difficult for him as he had suffered from neuritis in his right arm since student days. Leila Andrews (later Hall), a close friend and fellow pupil at St. Paul's of Holst's daughter Imogen (who also was to become a successful composer), over sixty years later wrote the following touching reminiscence:

“On one never to be forgotten evening we had a Musical Society concert. Our music hall had a flat area at the bottom which took two pianos and a large space for the orchestra. There were tiers of seats in circles going right up nearly to the ceiling. Well – on this special night Vaughan Williams came, and our two piano mistresses (Vally Lasker and Nora Day) played through *The Planets* on two pianos, before it had been performed in public. I sat just VW and “Gussy” as we all called him, and looked down on them as they sat and shared a score of *The Planets*. They nudged each other like a couple of big schoolboys, listening avidly to the music; sometimes it was a questioning look – but mostly a look of pleasurable excitement!”

The orchestral version was heard by an invited audience in September 1918, Boult conducting the New Queen's Hall Orchestra, but its first public performance, complete, was not until October 1920, Albert Coates conducting the London Symphony Orchestra – both in London's Queen's Hall.

Composition of *The Planets* was spread over two years, from 1914 to 1916, a fateful period indeed. Holst said that the opening movement, Mars, The Bringer of War, was not a reaction to the outbreak of war but fixed in his mind already. However the prevailing climate of foreboding must have been a stimulus, as was the desire for peace in the second half of 1914 when he worked on Venus, The Bringer of Peace – *not* The Goddess of Love: Holst was at pains to distinguish the astrological symbolism of the planets from their counterparts in classical mythology. His interest in astrology had been encouraged by the author Clifford Bax, younger brother of Arnold Bax the composer.

The terrifying effect of Mars is due to the relentless advance of its inhumanly fast march tempo, made even more unnerving by its five-beat pounding rhythms (three opposing two) and use of the tritone, that unearthly interval of a half octave, long since branded “the devil in music” and, because of its instability and unpredictability, well suited to represent impending doom. In complete contrast, Venus is soothing and tranquil, with gently oscillating harmonies. The lovely shimmering sounds of its conclusion disintegrate into silence.

The winged messenger of Mercury is, according to Holst, the mind, but we think it possible that he was alluding also to another winged messenger – the electric telegraph, for the dot-and-dash patterns of Morse code appear as ostinato accompaniments. The piece is a quicksilver scherzo, with rapidly alternating keys and rhythms creating the impression of mental gymnastics.

The word “jovial” comes from the Roman god Jupiter, and in this case it can be applied equally to Holst's evocation of the planet. He himself said that together with jollity in the ordinary sense this movement portrayed the more ceremonial kind of rejoicing associated with religious or national festivities; in between bouts of rumbustious high spirits comes the confident melody later re-used by Holst to set Cecil Spring Rice's patriotic-religious poem “The Two Fatherlands”, more commonly known by its first line “I Vow To Thee, My Country”. As a hymn tune it has become known as “Thaxted”.

Holst thought Saturn the best movement. The feeling of grinding weariness imparted by the almost imperceptible but nonetheless inescapable approach of old age (the tread of time signified by Holst's favourite device of alternating chords) is horribly real and in its own way just as frightening as the warlike Mars. It works up to a period of blind panic which provides release, and in the final pages the music radiates the fulfilment which old age brings with its acceptance.

The mischief conjured up by Uranus is of the same sort as that in *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* (1897) by Dukas. In this scherzo, as galumphing as Mercury had been airy, the sinister tritone forms part of the spells and of the maniacal laughter, until after a climactic incantation the magician vanishes in a puff of smoke.

The principle of alternation, used so tellingly through much of the suite, is nowhere more hypnotically employed than in Neptune, thought to be the furthest planet from the sun before the discovery of Pluto (which has since lost its planetary status) in 1930. The "three plus two equal five" beat pattern of Mars is brought back, but in such a way as to produce a timeless, ethereal atmosphere. Tonalities are made to fluctuate and at times to vibrate together, but always within a dynamic that implies great distance, enhanced by timbres suggesting scintillating points of light. In the orchestral version a wordless, "disembodied" female chorus, unseen, closes the work. Holst had them turn and walk away, still singing, until a door was closed behind them, so as to fade out the music gradually. A similar effect has been achieved electronically in this recording.

We are grateful to Lindsay Bury, Joy Hall, Michael Jones, Colin Matthews and Charlotte Sefton for providing information and material.

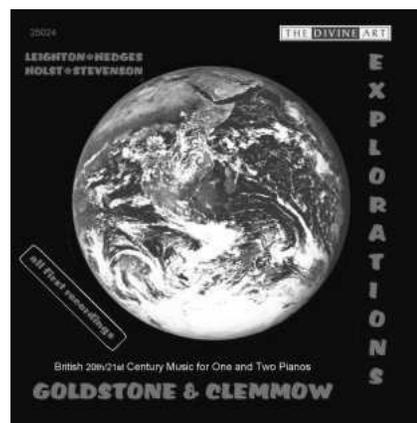
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Subsequent to the creation of the full orchestral score, a version for piano duet (four hands at one piano) was also produced, and has been widely promoted and publicised as being by Holst himself. However the title page of the published score, dating from 1923, clearly confirms that the duet version was arranged by Nora Day and Vally Lasker. This does not affect the chronology referred to above, which is: (1) two-piano version by Holst; (2) orchestral version by Holst; (3) duet version by Day & Lasker, though the two-piano version was not published until 1949.

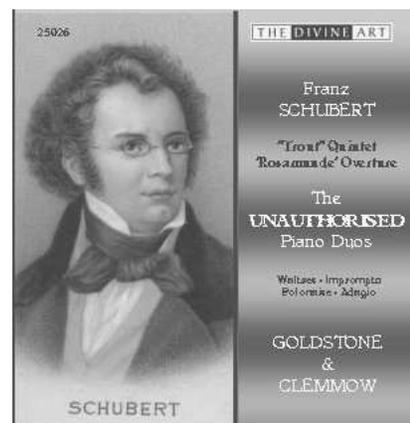
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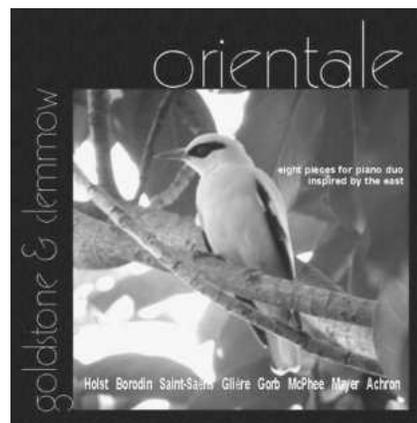
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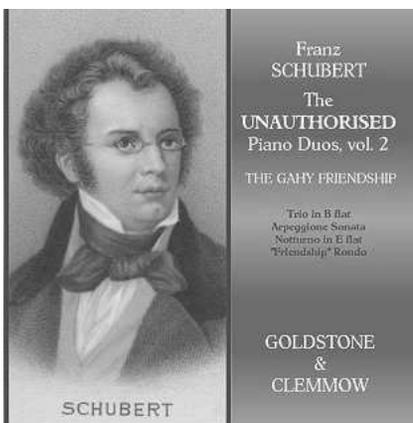
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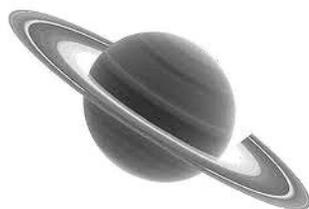


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The Performers

With CDs approaching forty in number and a busy concert schedule stretching back more than a quarter of a century, the British piano duo Goldstone and Clemmow is firmly established as a leading force. Described by *Gramophone* as ‘a dazzling husband and wife team’, by *International Record Review* as ‘a British institution in the best sense of the word’, and by *The Herald*, Glasgow, as ‘the UK’s pre-eminent two-piano team’, internationally known artists Anthony Goldstone and Caroline Clemmow formed their duo in 1984 and married in 1989. Their extremely diverse activities in two-piano and piano-duet recitals and double concertos, taking in major festivals, have sent them all over the British Isles as well as to Europe, the Middle East and several times to the U.S.A., where they have received standing ovations and such press accolades as ‘revelations such as this are rare in the concert hall these days’ (*Charleston Post and Courier*). In their refreshingly presented concerts they mix famous masterpieces and fascinating rarities, which they frequently unearth themselves, into absorbing and hugely entertaining programmes; their numerous B.B.C. broadcasts have often included first hearings of unjustly neglected works, and their equally enterprising and acclaimed commercial recordings include many world premières.

Having presented the complete duets of Mozart for the bicentenary, they decided to accept the much greater challenge of performing the vast quantity of music written by Schubert specifically for four hands at one piano. This they have repeated several times in mammoth seven-concert cycles, probably a world first in their completeness (including works not found in the collected edition) and original recital format. *The Musical Times* wrote of this venture: ‘The Goldstone/Clemmow performances invited one superlative after another.’ The complete cycle (as a rare bonus including as encores Schumann’s eight Schubert-inspired Polonaises) was recorded on seven CDs, ‘haunted with the spirit of Schubert’ – *Luister*, The Netherlands.



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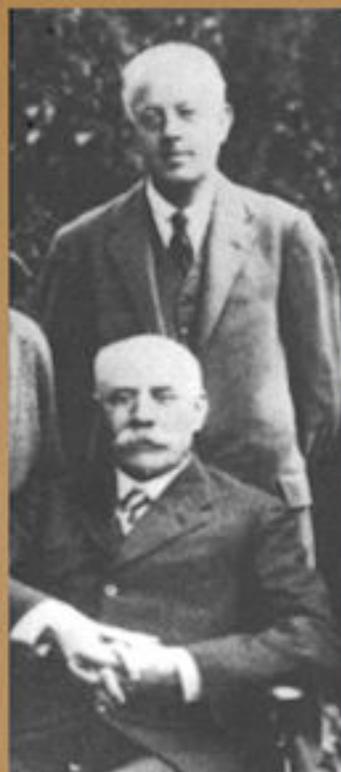
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Goldstone and Clemmow



**Edgar Bainton (back)
Edward Elgar (front)**



Gustav Holst (left), Edward Elgar (right)



Frank Bury