

Symphony's 'Planets in HD' blasts off Saturday

Dazzling NASA footage offers tour of the solar system

By Paul Hyde
Arts Writer
phyde@greenvilleonline.com

Great music is cherished for providing transports of joy and felicity, so it's perhaps no surprise that an orchestra would seek to transport you literally out of this world.

That's what the Greenville Symphony Orchestra hopes to do this weekend as it presents "The Planets — An HD Odyssey."

The concert features English composer Gustav Holst's "The Planets," a popular favorite of the orchestral repertoire, performed against the backdrop of large projections of the actual planets in our solar system.

The ever-moving, high-definition visual presentation is made up of NASA video footage from the past 35 years.

"The images come from satellites, land rovers and other sources," says GSO music director Edvard Tchivzhel, who'll be on the podium for the concert. "There will be a huge screen above the orchestra and it will be high-definition video. It will be something spectacular. You'll feel like you're there yourself."

"The Planets — An HD Odyssey" was created by filmmaker Duncan Copp for the Houston Symphony Orchestra two years ago. That orchestra has taken the program on the road, and other orchestral ensembles around the country also have featured the presentation.

The HD program has not failed to dazzle audiences and critics wherever it has been presented.

"The images in the movie, produced and directed by Duncan Copp, were often astonishing," wrote Anthony Tommasini, the chief music critic of *The New York*

YOU CAN GO

What: "The Planets — An HD Odyssey," presented by the Greenville Symphony Orchestra

When: 8 p.m. Saturday; 3 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 15

Where: Peace Center Concert Hall

Tickets: \$58 to \$15

Information: 864-467-3000 or www.peacecenter.org

Times, when the Houston Symphony performed the work in New York in 2010. "Photographs from rovers and satellites, radar images and computer-generated graphics were combined to give the audience the impression of circling individual planets and sometimes flying over their awesomely barren landscapes."

An especially large orchestra, numbering almost 100, will be on stage for the concert.

"The Planets" itself always has and always will be one of the most exciting pieces of music, and it's an enormous production in terms of the forces involved," Tchivzhel says.

Tchivzhel says the visual presentation, produced in Greenville by Opus 3 Artists, includes a director who coordinates the moving images with the maestro's tempos.

It was Holst's avid interest in astrology that inspired the composer in 1917 to write what has become his best-known work, "The Planets."

The astrological associations of the planets, excluding Earth,

provide the meaning for each of the work's seven movements. Mars, for instance, is "the bringer of war." Venus is "the bringer of peace."

"The Planets — An HD Odyssey" directs the emphasis away from astrology and toward astronomy — to the planets themselves.

The concerts on Saturday and Sunday open with Alexander Scriabin's impressionistic "Poem of Ecstasy," written between 1905 and 1908.

Tchivzhel believes the piece is being presented in Greenville for the first time. He says the "Poem of Ecstasy" fits well in the program because Scriabin, one of the more colorful eccentrics in the history of classical music, was a mystic, with a distinct messianic bent and a cosmic outlook.

"He believed he could change the world for the better through music," Tchivzhel says. "His music is very emotional. The whole concert should be a great night of ecstasy for everyone."

The Greenville Symphony Orchestra is running a special one-week promotion that allows classical music fans to purchase tickets for only \$19 if they pick two or more Masterworks or chamber concerts included in this season. (The final concert of the season, featuring Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, is not included in the promotion.)

The promotion runs today through Friday. Those interested should call the Peace Center box office at 864-467-3000.

■ Arts writer
Paul Hyde
can be
reached at
864-298-
4004.



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