

Monday Mag



Dr. José Francisco Salgado

Seeing Stars

Posted By: Amanda Farrell-Low
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The Victoria Symphony explores The Planets

Who knew astronomy was so infectious? Victoria Symphony maestra Tania Miller says she was blindsided by a bought of enthusiasm about all things celestial after being approached by the Dominion Astrophysical Centre's director Jim Hesser a couple years back and asked if the Symphony wanted to take part in 2009's International Year of Astronomy celebrations.

"Originally, the question was, 'Is there any way the Victoria Symphony would be interested in perhaps collaborating with this theme and celebrating this theme in a musical way?' How that was going to be celebrated was left completely open," recalls Miller. "Because [Hesser] is so passionate about astronomy and this whole special year of Galileo, he caused me to get excited about it, to do a lot of research about who Galileo was and which composers were inspired by astronomy and the universe, which pieces of music over history have come out of that relationship or that awe and wonder that comes from humans looking up at the sky."

After doing her research, Miller decided the Symphony would help celebrate the 400th anniversary of Galileo's first look through his telescope in two ways: by putting together a children's education concert—this past weekend's Music of the Spheres—and by conducting two performances of British composer Gustav Holst's *The Planets*, accompanied by an acclaimed video collage put

together by Dr. José Francisco Salgado, a Chicago-based astronomer and visual artist.

Miller says she chose *The Planets*, a seven-movement suite that explores the planets of our solar system (excluding Earth), because of its wide-ranging orchestration. “There’s nothing that is so uniquely orchestrated as Holst’s *Planets*,” she says. “He captures the fear of war in his movement ‘Mars’; he captures an ethereal nature to ‘Venus’ . . . there’s such an atmospheric description that is so exciting.”

Salgado agrees—and says this feeling is also captured in his video suite, which utilizes real footage of the universe as well as graphic design elements. “I love the fact that each movement is its own world, so to speak,” he says. “The tone of the music as well as the visual resources available for each of these very different planets defined the style for each movement. So in the end each planet got its own unique short film.”

The video suite (which you can preview on the Symphony’s website) was designed to match the tone and tempo of the music in order to create an all-encompassing experience—and perhaps inspire the audience to leave the concert wanting more.

“My intention was not to create a documentary but an art piece that would plant the seed of curiosity,” says Salgado, who is currently working on symphonic video suites about the moon and the work of astronomers Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler—and has some ideas for non-celestial suites in mind, too. “Hopefully some concertgoers will head to the science museum or library after watching the videos. If some of them attend the concerts because of the videos, then I sincerely hope that they will get more interested in classical music and support the Victoria Symphony. The video suites work both ways.” M

The Planets

2:30pm Sunday, November 1

8pm Monday, November 2

Royal Theatre, 805 Broughton

Tickets \$29.50-\$68.50

250-386-6121

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