

HELIOS

BY TIMOTHY C. TAKACH

FEBRUARY 9, 7PM
FEBRUARY 10, 4PM & 7PM

CPCCo Planetarium at Columbia Basin College





MID-COLUMBIA MASTERSINGERS

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR Justin Raffa

SOF	D A	NI	1
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Eil Traverse

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PROGRAM

Today's performance is being recorded. Please silence cell phones and watches.

Please hold applause until the end of the program.

There will be no intermission.

Helios

Timothy C. Takach (b. 1978)

Prelude: Chaos and Order

I. Pluto (At the Border)

II. Neptune (The Storm Was Loose)

III. Uranus (White Silences)

IV. Saturn (Longing for Infinity)

V. Jupiter (A Wife Betrayed)

VI. Comet (Transmigration)

Interlude: With My Face to the Sun

VII. Mars (Love Asleep and Waiting)

VIII. Moon (Everything is Made of Light)

IX. Earth (Only Here)

X. Venus (Everything Seems Possible)

Interlude: Opening Inward

XI. Mercury (Move Towards Freedom)

XII. Sun (Perihelion)









Helios was premiered by The Singers–Minnesota Choral Artists, and was supported by Karen Koentopf, Tom Arneson, American Choral Directors Association of Minnesota (ACDA-MN) and the Minnesota Music Educators Association (MMEA), Minnesota Valley Men's Chorale, Red Shift, Roomful of Teeth, The Singers–Minnesota Choral Artists, and Washington Community High School

Visual Projection Co-commissioners include The Esoterics, Inversion Ensemble, Orlando Sings, True Concord Voices and Orchestra, and University of Michigan

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venmo

TIMOTHY C. TAKACH, COMPOSER



Inspired by captivating narrative, speculative fiction and making better humans through art, the music of Timothy C. Takach has risen fast in the concert world. Applauded for his melodic lines and rich, intriguing harmonies, Takach has received commissions and premieres from GRAMMY Award-winning ensembles Roomful of Teeth and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, the St. Olaf Band, Cantus, U.S. Army Field Band and Soldiers' Chorus, Lorelei Ensemble, VocalEssence, the DeBartolo Performing Arts Center, The Rose Ensemble, and numerous other organizations. His compositions have been performed on A Prairie Home Companion, The Boston Pops holiday tour, nationwide on PBS, many All-State and festival programs and at venues such as the Library of Congress, Kennedy Center and Royal Opera House Muscat.

He is a co-creator of the theatrical production of All is Calm: the Christmas Truce of 1914, by Peter Rothstein. The critically adored show has had over 120 performances since its premiere in 2006. He was also selected for the 2014 Nautilus Music-Theater Composer-Librettist Studio. In 2018 his oratorio We, the Unknown premiered at the Folly Theatre in Kansas City featuring the Heartland Men's Chorus, and in 2019 "Su Rahva Koda (The House of Your Kindred)" was premiered by the Memphis Symphony Orchestra. 2019 also saw the premiere of Helios, Takach's new 65' work for a cappella choir inspired by the solar system. In 2015 Takach placed third for

The American Prize for Composition for Wind Ensemble for his piece "Frost Giant." He was Composer-in-Residence for the Texas Boys Choir from 2019-2021 and for The Singers–Minnesota Choral Artists from 2018-2023.

Takach has frequent work as a composer-in-residence, presenter, conductor, clinician and lecturer for conventions, schools and organizations across the country. He is a full-time composer and lives in Minneapolis with his wife and two sons.

JUSTIN RAFFA, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Since his arrival in the Tri-Cities in summer 2008, Justin has focused on enhancing the quality of life in his community through arts and culture. In addition to his primary role as Artistic Director of the Mid-Columbia Mastersingers, Justin served for several years as Chorusmaster of the Yakima Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Manager of the Mid-Columbia Symphony, and Chorusmaster of the Oregon East Symphony in Pendleton, OR. Justin has also served as an actor, music director and board member with Mid-Columbia Musical Theatre, music director with Columbia Basin College Summer Showcase productions, and Minister of Music at All Saints Episcopal Church in Richland. He is a former board member with the Washington State and Northwest Region chapters of the American Choral Directors Association. Additionally, Justin has been an adjudicator for festivals and competitions for regional music and theatre education associations and is the former chair of the City of Richland's Arts Commission. A South Jersey native proud of his Sicilian heritage, Justin holds a Bachelor of Music degree in Music Education with a vocal concentration from Westminster Choir College in Princeton NJ and a Master of Music degree in Choral Conducting from University of Arizona in Tucson.



Justin has sung as part of the Berkshire Choral Festival, Spoleto Festival USA, Voces Novae et Antiquae, the Tucson Symphony Orchestra Chorus, Male Ensemble Northwest, and continues to perform with both the Festival Chorus of the Oregon Bach Festival and True Concord Voices & Orchestra in Tucson of which he is a founding member. As a tenor with the Westminster Symphonic Choir under Joseph Flummerfelt, Justin sang with some of the world's leading conductors and orchestras. In the Pacific Northwest, Justin sings with Chor Anno, Polyphony Plus, and the Tacoma Bach Festival, three regional ensembles made up of professional choral musicians.

Justin is a passionate advocate for the arts and currently serves as the immediate past chair of the board of the Washington State Arts Commission. The City of Richland Arts Commission honored him with its 2011 award for Outstanding Individual Contribution to the Arts. He was an eight year board member with the Arts Center Task Force, whose goal is to build a much needed Performing Arts Center for the Tri-Cities. Justin is the current board chair with Leadership Tri-Cities, President-Elect of the Richland Rotary Club, and can be seen as a frequent performer and emcee for many charitable events across his community. He has been awarded as the Washington State 2013 Outstanding Emerging Choral Conductor, the Columbia Basin Music Educators Association 2014 Friend of Music, and is a graduate of Leadership Tri-Cities Class 19. Outside of the arts, Justin is a member of the City of Richland's Board of Adjustment, the Tri-City Regional Chamber of Commerce's Local Government Affairs Committee, and proudly stood as a candidate for for public office in 2020. Justin lives with his partner of eighteen years Molly Holleran, singer and voice teacher extraordinaire, in a beautiful 1940s Hanford era government home in Richland, WA.



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Thank you to Stephanie Cohen and Col Solare Winery for their generous donation of wine for Saturday's after-party!



FROM THE COMPOSER

Helios is a musical exploration of our solar system. The libretto is inspired by the Greek and Roman gods for which the planets are named, the science of each planetary body, and the faith in unanswered questions we have as humans. The idea for this piece was born on a tour with Cantus back in 2013. I was thinking about how to combine my passions together in music, and I thought I should write a choral cycle based on the planets. Over the course of the next 6 years I researched the solar system and started to piece together the libretto movement by movement. I couldn't find the support to fund the whole cycle in one commission, so I started to write individual movements for smaller commissions along the way. In the spring of 2018 I was talking with Matt Culloton about having it on The Singers' 15th anniversary season, even though it wasn't finished or funded. He told me, "if you write it, I'll program it." So I jumped the rest of the way in. At that point I had written four movements, and I would complete a fifth the next fall.

The libretto contains poetry commissioned for this piece alongside translations of ancient writing and previously published poetry. Each movement's text is inspired by the planet for which it is named, and Helios itself has an overarching theme of control. In our lives, some things are within our control and others are not. Helios asks us to analyze these situations and be active in finding ways where we can choose. We have the choice to point our lives in a certain way, to decide who we want to be and how we want to live.

In "Pluto" we stand at the border of chaos, ready to jump in. Patricia Monaghan has us believe that chaos can be beautiful, that it offers us more exciting choices than control. The music brings us into chaos immediately, each section in their own rhythmic pattern, surging and combining to make something greater.

"Neptune" offers us a familiar story of a father intervening in his two sons' conflict. As a father I can emphasize with Neptune's rage at the chaos his sons are causing but I also love the description of how he controls them: "He sways their passions with his words and soothes their hearts." A great way to parent. Turbulent trills and glissandi abound as the winds combat each other, and the contrasting homophony later delivers Neptune's words.

Patricia Monaghan's poetry embodies the cold isolation of Uranus. The axial tilt of Uranus is almost parallel to the solar plane, meaning that instead of spinning like a top, it rolls around the sun in it's orbit, causing an alternating 42 years of sunlight then darkness at the poles. This isolating coldness is what inspired this poem choice and the paired quote from Shakespeare. So many people feel isolated, alone, unloved, and they feel as if their fate is not in their own hands.

Tony Silvestri uses Saturn as an autobiographical account of his childhood, how he gazed at Saturn and unlocked his wonder for the universe. The movement opens with a solo trio, more intimate and personal than any texture we've heard so far. When the choir enters the heavens crack open, and wonder is upon us. The choir lays down a familiar harmonic progression often found in popular music, rooting this movement here on Earth, but the text explores the many wonders that occur in the heavens.

The title character does not appear in "Jupiter," but instead the movement is sung from the perspective of Juno, Jupiter's wife. Silvestri has written a rage aria with a powerful twist. Instead of

only proclaiming her rage, Juno marks Jupiter's beautiful image as his famous red spot - a continuous storm, the largest in the solar system.

In "Comet" Jupiter asks Venus to take the spirit of Julius Caesar and turn him into a star. She agrees and carries his spirit up to the heavens, feeling it transform into a fiery comet. In ancient Rome, Caesar's Comet was seen for 7 days in 44 BC. The repeating glissandi in the bass section are a Shepard tone, giving an unending sense of rising motion. Are we able to control the legacy we leave behind? We cannot transform into a comet, but we can choose what we wish to leave behind, how we want to be remembered.

Writing a piece inspired by Mars offered a much-needed exploration of how we view masculinity. The Roman god of war is usually portrayed in a very aggressive, stereotypically masculine way. To me, the way culture tends to convey traditional masculinity is not usually the truth but a mask we wear to show bravado, toughness and confidence.

When the 2004 Mars rover Spirit broke a wheel, it ended up dragging the wheel across the surface of the planet, scratching the surface to discover silica underneath. This discovery pointed to the fact that hot water once flowed on or under the surface of Mars. It's such a great metaphor for our sense of manliness - that as our outer layer is scarred we reveal something more gentle underneath. Bill Reichard's wonderful poem explores all of this and offers what I think is a more complete honest view of what it means to be a man.

"Moon" has a mysterious feel to it: an exploration of sound, texture and environment. We hear a brilliant sense of light in the climax, even as a mere reflection of the true source.

Like "Saturn," "Earth" is rooted on the ground. While both depict the wonder of the heavens, Newhouse's poem reminds us how special our humanity is. Humans are a product of the only known cradle of life in the universe, and we alone get to experience complex emotion.

Venus has been seen in the night sky throughout most of human history, and in Julia Klatt Singer's words "we feel a strong attachment to her—she rises for you, lingers for you, wants you to see her, notice her, want her to stay in the sky. And since she is the second brightest thing up there, next to the sun, she does linger, stay." Venus orbits in the opposite direction from all other planets in our system, moving against expectations, showing how powerful we can be if we choose.

An interlude illustrates the value of inward growth and change, contrary to the expectation that change is always visible and in a prescribed direction. Self-discovery and awareness lead us into "Mercury," where a limited pitch set opens the piece, eventually yielding to a wide palette of color and harmony. We are in charge of our own limits. We can make the pendulum shift in as many degrees of freedom as we can imagine. In a universe where chaos is beautiful and breeds life, we can still control our own balance and destiny.

The sun is our greatest source of energy. Our journey through the solar system ends as we finally are drawn into its warmth, enveloped in family, community wonder and light. We are home.

- Timothy C. Takach, 2019

HELIOS: LIBRETTO

PRELUDE: CHAOS AND ORDER

Chaos was the law of nature; Order was the dream of man. Chaos often breeds life, when order breeds habit.

- Henry Brooks Adams

I. Pluto (At the Border)

Here is where chaos starts.

It is the fiercest hunger. It is a great tearing pain that so occupies the mind that there is nothing else.

It is being breathed. It is being breathless.

Standing on the border of chaos means standing in a sharp cold wind on the highest pass in the arctic mountains.

It means plunging into stars.
It means soaring into jade seas.

Here at the border we are not in chaos yet. This is more relentless than chaos. And

more beautiful. Far, far more beautiful.

- Patricia Monaghan, "Mandelbrot Set: 4. The Border" (used with permission.)

II. NEPTUNE (THE STORM WAS LOOSE)

Neptune, meanwhile, greatly troubled, saw that the sea was churned with vast murmur, and the storm was loose and the still waters welled from their deepest levels: he raised his calm face from the waves, gazing over the deep. He calls the East and West winds to him, and then says:

"Tantane vos generis tenuit fiducia vestri?

"Does confidence in your birth fill you so?

Iam caelum terramque meo sine numine, venti,

Winds, do you dare, without my intent, to mix earth with sky, miscere, et tantas audetis tollere moles?"

and cause such trouble, now?"

So he speaks, and swifter than his speech, he calms the swollen sea, scatters the gathered cloud, and brings back the sun. He sways their passions with his words and soothes their hearts: so all the uproar of the ocean died, as soon as their father, gazing over the water, carried through the clear sky, wheeled his horses, and gave them their head, flying behind in his chariot.

- Virgil: Aeneid I lines, 124-156 (edit), trans. A.S. Kline, PoetryInTranslation.com. (used with permission.)

III. URANUS (WHITE SILENCES)

Beyond geography. Beyond blood. Beyond latitude. Beyond salt.

Beyond continents. Beyond tears. That kind of coldness.

My hair is beaded with crystals. Forgetful and aloof, I am slipping

into white silences, becoming cold skin over hard finality.

- Patricia Monaghan, "White Silences" (used with permission.)

It is the stars, The stars above us, govern our conditions.

- William Shakespeare, King Lear, 4.3.32-33

IV. SATURN (LONGING FOR INFINITY)

When I was nine years old, I first looked through a telescope, And what I saw astounded me: Floating in the inky black, The orb of Saturn, like a pearl, Encircled in its perfect rings. So small it seemed, and yet as large As almost a thousand Earths; So close, and yet so very far way.

The sight awoke in me A longing for infinity And all its wonders:

The spinning planets, burning stars; Galaxies of endless worlds
Hurtling headlong through the void;
The many-colored nebulae—
Graveyards of exploded stars,
And nurseries of the new;
The universe extending
In ever-widening spheres
Of color, light, and energy;
An endless source of wonder and humility.

This journey through infinity Began for me when I first beheld The icy rings of Saturn From a field on Earth That summer evening When I was nine years old.

- Charles Anthony Silvestri
- Commissioned for Helios

V. JUPITER (A WIFE BETRAYED)

Look at him.
Just look at him.
Smug and fat, pompous, preening,
Rolling about in bedsheets
Of orange and scarlet satin,
Surrounded by his paramours—
Io and Europa,
Iocaste and Eurydome,
Leda, Adrastea,
Callisto, Themisto— [Even S-2010-J2,
that slut!]
So many I can't even count
Or care to remember.
And yet, I do remember.

Look at him.
He cares little for my honor,
Even less for my feelings.
I am his lover! His wife! His queen!
And yet no planet wanders named for
me!

HELIOS: LIBRETTO

No stately Juno to glide about the sun, Wrapped in swirling clouds of rose and silver grey...

Alas, that is not to be, For Jove takes all. Attracts all. Rules all.

But I am Juno, Mighty Queen of gods and men, And I demand my due! I shall be a tempest,

Red and roiling like an angry sore,
Digging into his tender side—
A bright red spot to spoil his splendor,
A reminder of the ageless rage
Of a wife betrayed.
So, look at him!
All who gaze at him,
From now until the ending of the worlds, Shall see only me!

- Charles Anthony Silvestri
- Commissioned for Helios

VI. COMET (TRANSMIGRATION)

Then Jupiter, the Father, spoke..." Take up Caesar's spirit and change it into a star...

He had barely finished, when gentle Venus stood, seen by no one, and took up the newly freed spirit of her Caesar from his body, and preventing it from vanishing into the air, carried it towards the glorious stars. As she carried it, she felt it glow and take fire, and loosed it from her breast: it climbed higher than the moon, and drawing behind it a fiery tail, shone as a star.

- Ovid: Metamorphosis, trans. A.S. Kline, PoetryInTranslation.com. (used with permission.)

INTERLUDE: WITH MY FACE TO THE SUN

I wish to leave the world
By it's natural door;
Do not put me in the dark
I am good, and like a good thing
I will die with my face to the sun.

- José Martí, excerpt from "A Morir"

VII. MARS (LOVE ASLEEP AND WAITING)

A solitary planet spins alone But never alone There are moons

There are stars

A silent man lives alone

But never alone

There are voices

There are songs

Under the rocky surface

There is ice

Where once was water

Under the cold hide

There is ice

But also blood

A lonely planet spins amidst

The endless celestial bodies

The vast potential of space

A single man can never be lonely

If he's a son, a father, a brother If he's a husband, a friend, a lover

Peel back the planet's skin

And find water, waiting, for the sun Peel back the body's fierce façade

And find love, asleep, and waiting

- William Reichard
- Commissioned for Helios

Only here is there spring, only here the breath of the rose. Only here is there miracle, suffering, awe— and only here do they kneel in prayer.

- Brian Newhouse
- Commissioned for Helios

X. VENUS (EVERYTHING SEEMS POSSIBLE)

What is life with nothing to contain it?
Shore or edge of night, first rising star
For you
Her favorite word is linger
For her
Bliss is the blackest sky
The way she lights it
With her beauty.
When the sea became the sea
She moved like she still moves
In the opposite direction
Towards that something
To define her, beyond
which everything seems
possible.

- Julia Klatt Singer
- Commissioned for Helios

VIII. Moon (Everything is Made of Light)

The moon translates a rhythm of this night that knows no breath. Everything is made of light. The whole world is glowing.

- William Reichard, (used with permission.)

IX. EARTH (ONLY HERE)

My skies blaze and dazzle with ice, lava burns in my veins.
All the glories of the gods are here—but no gods gave me their name.

Mars may boast about war, but only here are there blades, and only here blood-stained soil.

Venus may preach on love, but only here does an eye meet an eye and whole new heavens are born.

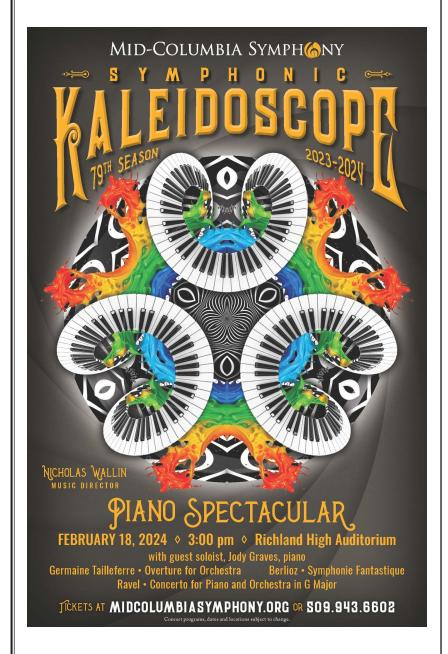
INTERLUDE: OPENING INWARD

I am, at this moment, walking in a direction you cannot imagine, you who judge everything in terms of forward motion, you who imagine me unmoving, waiting as you pass through my world like a brilliant burning comet, leaving faint periodic traces in a spiral galaxy: I am opening inward,

spiralling towards nothingness and truth, moving in no direction you can imagine, opening like an expanding universe with no unmoving point within it.

- Patricia Monaghan, excerpt from "Nothing is Ever Simultaneous" (used with permission.)

In my breast are the stars of my fate.
- Johann Christoph Friedrich von
Schiller (ad. TCT)



UPCOMING ARTS EVENTS

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MID-COLUMBIA SYMPHONY Feb 18: Piano Spectacular

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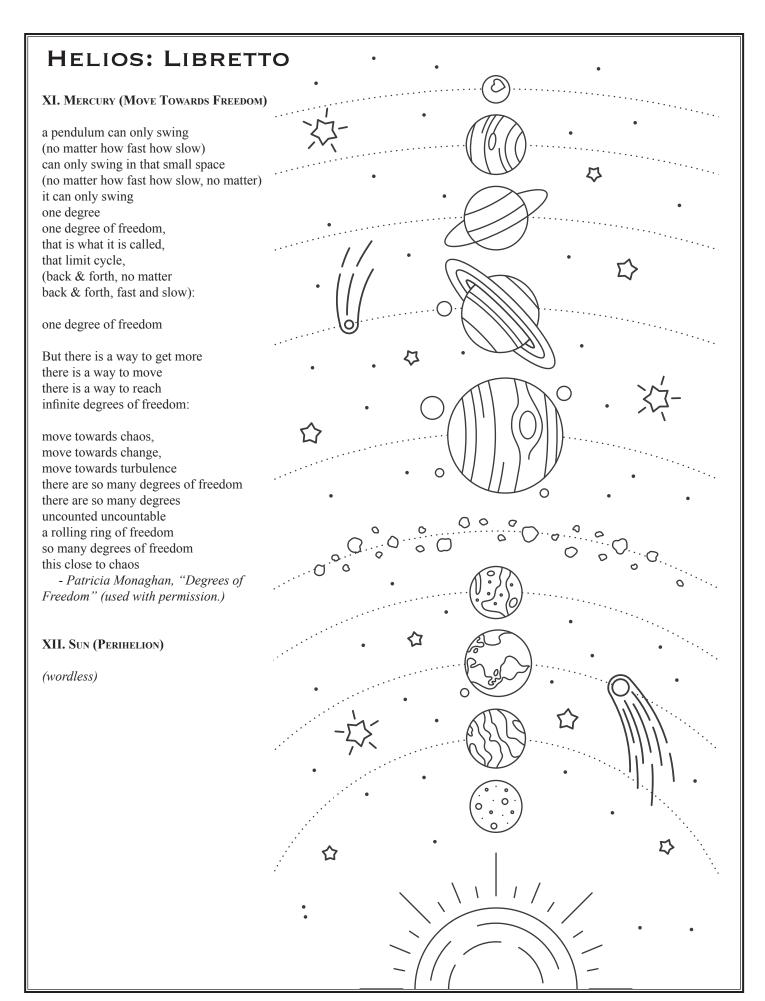
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