

LIVERMORE AMADOR SYMPHONY

Lara Webber
Music Director & Conductor
Sat. May 31, 2025, 7:30 p.m.

Inside the Music talk by
Lara Webber, 7:00–7:15 p.m.
Bankhead Theater, Livermore

Celestial Sounds

Sunrise from *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1896)
Opus 30

Richard Strauss
(1864–1949)

Selections from *The Planets* (1914–1916)

Gustav Holst
(1874–1934)

- I. Mars, the Bringer of War
- II. Venus, the Bringer of Peace
- IV. Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity

Clair de Lune (Moonlight) (1890, rev. 1905)
from *Suite Bergamasque*, L. 75

Claude Debussy
(1862–1918)

orchestral transcription by Arthur Luck

I Sang to You and the Moon, from *Chicago Songs*
(2008 / orchestrated 2016)

Kurt Erickson
(b. 1970)

Song to the Moon, from *Rusalka* (1900)
Opus 114

Antonín Dvořák
(1841–1904)

Heidi Moss Erickson, soprano

INTERMISSION

Quest Science Center, Las Positas College, and Tri-Valley Stargazers
personnel available in the lobby and courtyard — with telescopes

Aux étoiles (To the Stars) (1874, rev. 1911)

Henri Duparc
(1848–1933)

Star Wars Suite for Orchestra (1977, 1980)

John Williams
(b. 1932)

- I. Main Title
- II. Princess Leia's Theme
- III. The Imperial March (Darth Vader's Theme)
- IV. Yoda's Theme
- V. The Throne Room & End Title

**Lighting designs projected during the concert are by
The Mad Alchemist.**

**After the concert, the audience and performers are invited to look through
telescopes with Tri-Valley Stargazers in the courtyard and enjoy a reception
in the lobby hosted by the Livermore-Amador Symphony Guild
and featuring wines from Cuda Ridge Wines and Las Positas Vineyards.**

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Program Notes

Sunrise from *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1896)

Richard Strauss

Opus 30

(1864–1949)

Few moments in orchestral music are as instantly recognizable—or as thrilling—as the opening of Richard Strauss’s *Also sprach Zarathustra*. With its massive brass fanfare and blazing orchestral sunrise, this short introduction has transcended the concert hall, entering pop culture via Stanley Kubrick’s film *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

Also sprach Zarathustra (“Thus Spake Zarathustra”) is a tone poem loosely inspired by Friedrich Nietzsche’s philosophical novel of the same name. The book explores profound ideas about human consciousness, time, and the evolution of the self beyond conventional morality. The work’s famous opening section—subtitled “Sunrise”—depicts the symbolic dawning of human awareness. From the depths of the double basses and contrabassoon, the music builds toward a brilliant C major chord that floods the sonic landscape like the rising sun. A trumpet motive, three ascending notes, returns throughout the larger work.

Mars, Venus, and Jupiter from *The Planets* (1914–1916)

Gustav Holst

(1874–1934)

When Gustav Holst began composing *The Planets*, in 1914, he was inspired not by astronomy but by astrology. Each of the suite’s seven movements captures the emotional and psychological essence of a planet’s purported astrological character—not its physical properties or mythological tales.

Mars “Mars, the Bringer of War” is a terrifying vision of mechanized conflict. Set in an unrelenting 5/4 meter, the movement is driven by hammering rhythms, clashing brass, and a chilling sense of inevitability. It’s not a battle march in the heroic sense but a brutal, impersonal force—music that evokes not glory but destruction. Holst’s prescience is eerie: Although written before the first shots of World War I were fired, “Mars” became an emblem of the horrors to come.

Venus As a direct contrast, “Venus, the Bringer of Peace” offers a balm after the violence of “Mars.” Here, Holst writes music of radiant calm and tender beauty. Solo horn, celesta, and harp create a luminous atmosphere, and gentle strings and woodwinds weave melodies of healing and introspection. “Venus” doesn’t merely represent peace as an absence of war—it also suggests serenity, inner stillness, and spiritual grace. It’s one of the suite’s most lyrical and intimate moments.

Jupiter In “Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity,” Holst lets his orchestral imagination run wild. Bursting with energy, dancelike rhythms, and jubilant themes, the movement overflows with vitality and warmth. It includes a noble, hymnlike tune that is one of Holst’s most famous melodies and a moment of still grandeur, suggesting depth and dignity. “Jupiter” is the heart of *The Planets* in many ways: a celebration of life in all its richness.

Clair de Lune (Moonlight) (1890, rev. 1905)

Claude Debussy

from *Suite Bergamasque*, L. 75

(1862–1918)

orchestral transcription by **Arthur Luck**

Among the most beloved pieces in the classical repertoire, “Clair de Lune”—French for “moonlight”—is the third movement of Debussy’s *Suite Bergamasque*, a piano suite that evokes the delicacy and dreamlike charm of eighteenth-century French poetry and art. Although the original piano version is widely known, the piece has been transcribed for other types of ensembles, allowing its colors and textures to expand in new and magical ways.

Inspired by the poetry of Paul Verlaine, “Clair de Lune” captures the serene, luminous atmosphere of moonlight through gentle rhythms, subtle harmonic shifts, and an air of wistful

reflection. The orchestral setting enriches this experience: Woodwinds shimmer like starlight, strings swell with romantic warmth, and harp arpeggios gently ripple like moonlight on water.

Debussy, a central figure in musical Impressionism, often resisted that label, but his works undeniably transformed music at the turn of the twentieth century. “Clair de Lune” is a perfect expression of his sensibility: a world where mood, color, and nuance, a painting-with-sound quality, takes precedence over formality and overt drama. The result is a piece both intimate and expansive—a nocturne of extraordinary tenderness and timeless allure.

I Sang to You and the Moon, from *Chicago Songs*

(2008 / orchestrated 2016)

Kurt Erickson

(b. 1970)

In the words of the composer: “*Chicago Songs* musically re-creates the spirit and people found in Carl Sandburg’s iconic poetry. Sandburg’s world is one filled with the grit of burgeoning industrialization, the earnest hope of immigrant settlers, and the heartache and beauty found in the everyday. His characters are larger than life yet tragically human—there’s a poignancy in their foibles that I find very attractive. As a composer, I’ve always been drawn to nostalgic, highly personal subject matter, and these texts complement my own nostalgic, highly personal musical impulses.”

I sang to you and the moon
But only the moon remembers.
I sang
O reckless free-hearted
free-throated rhythms,
Even the moon remembers them
And is kind to me.

Song to the Moon, from *Rusalka* (1900)

Opus 114

Antonín Dvořák

(1841–1904)

Few opera arias capture the mystery and longing of the natural world as movingly as Dvořák’s “Song to the Moon” (“Měsíčku na nebi hlubokém”). Sung in the first act of his 1901 opera *Rusalka*, this hauntingly beautiful piece has become a favorite far beyond the opera stage.

Měsíčku na nebi hlubokém,
světlo tvé daleko vidí,
po světě bloudíš širokém,
díváš se v příbytky lidí.
Měsíčku, postůj chvíli,
řekni mi, řekni, kde je můj milý!
Řekni mu, stříbrný měsíčku,
mé že jej objímá rámě,
aby si alespoň chvíličku
vzpomenul ve snění na mě.
Zasvit’ mu do daleka, zasvit’ mu,
řekni mu, řekni, kdo tu naň čeká!
O mně-li duše lidská sní,
ať se tou vzpomínkou vzbudí!
Měsíčku, nezhasni, nezhasni!
Měsíčku, nezhasni!

Moon, high and deep in the sky
Your light travels far,
You travel around the wide world,
and see into people’s homes.
Moon, stand still a while
and tell me where is my dear.
Tell him, silvery moon,
that I am embracing him.
For at least momentarily
let him recall of dreaming of me.
Illuminate him far away,
and tell him, tell him who is waiting for him!
If his human soul is, in fact, dreaming of me,
may the memory awaken him!
Moon, don’t disappear, don’t disappear!
Don’t disappear!

Rusalka is a lyrical fairy tale in the spirit of Hans Christian Andersen’s “The Little Mermaid,” telling the story of a water nymph, Rusalka, who falls in love with a human prince. In this aria, Rusalka stands alone by the lake under the night sky, addressing the moon as a silent confidant. She asks it to find the prince and tell him of her love—a love so strong that she is willing to give up her voice and immortality to be with him.

The music is a sublime example of Dvořák's gift for melody and orchestral color. The aria unfolds slowly, with a gently undulating accompaniment that evokes the shimmering surface of the water and the quiet stillness of night. The vocal line soars with yearning, full of Slavic melancholy and luminous beauty. Its blend of folk-inflected lyricism and Romantic expressiveness has made it a beloved soprano aria.

Dvořák composed *Rusalka* late in his career, after returning to his native Bohemia (he had spent a sizeable amount of time in the United States, where he composed his Symphony No. 9, "From the New World," among others). Deeply inspired by Czech folklore and the natural world, the opera reflects his mature style. "Song to the Moon" is a tender plea from a soul suspended between two worlds.

Aux étoiles (To the Stars) (1874, rev. 1911)

Henri Duparc
(1848–1933)

Henri Duparc was a French Romantic composer whose small output is beloved for its deep emotional richness and refined craftsmanship. He is best known for his exquisite art songs. "Aux étoiles" stands as one of his few orchestral works, and one of his most profound.

A symphonic poem, "Aux étoiles" opens in hushed tones, with gently rising lines in the strings and winds evoking a sense of yearning or perhaps prayer. Over time, the music gains warmth, harmonic richness, and a quiet intensity. Duparc described the work as "a purely philosophical study," and its inspiration seems more metaphysical than earthly. Here, the stars are distant emblems of peace, eternity, and the unknowable. Restrained yet luminous, "Aux étoiles" is full of subtle harmonic color and expressive depth. It prefigures the sensibilities of composers such as Debussy and Ravel while remaining utterly personal in voice.

Star Wars Suite for Orchestra (1977, 1980)

John Williams
(b. 1932)

It's hard to imagine modern cinema—or modern music—without the unforgettable themes of John Williams. With the release of *Star Wars* in 1977, Williams not only helped define the sound of an entire film franchise but also reignited global interest in the power of orchestral music. Drawing inspiration from the sweeping Romanticism of composers such as Wagner, Korngold, and Holst, Williams created a rich and expansive musical universe. The *Star Wars* Suite, compiled by Williams in 1980 for concert performance, brings the symphonic majesty of the original film score to the concert stage.

Main Title The opening fanfare is one of the most recognizable in film history. Bold brass, soaring strings, and thunderous percussion launch listeners directly into the world of the Rebel Alliance and the Galactic Empire. Heroic and full of adventure, the theme has become synonymous with epic storytelling itself.

Princess Leia's Theme A lyrical contrast to the Main Title, Leia's theme is tender and elegant. Scored for solo instruments and lush strings, it reflects the princess's strength and grace, offering a moment of heartfelt beauty amidst the galaxy-spanning conflict.

Imperial March (Darth Vader's Theme) Although not originally in the score, the "Imperial March" from *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) is often added to concert versions of the suite. It is among Williams's most powerful creations—menacing, relentless, and instantly evocative of Darth Vader and the might of the Empire.

Yoda's Theme Where much of the *Star Wars* score is bold and heroic, "Yoda's Theme" is restrained and lyrical. A simple, dignified melody unfolds over soft strings and warm woodwinds, capturing the character's deep knowledge, quiet strength, and hidden power. The delicate theme grows in nobility and breadth as the music develops. Yoda, despite his small size and eccentric manner, is one of the most powerful and revered Jedi in the galaxy.

Throne Room and End Title This noble and triumphant music is a celebration of victory

and unity, combining thematic material from throughout the score in a grand orchestral finale. Williams's *Star Wars* Suite is more than a collection of film cues—it's a modern symphonic work in its own right. With its emotional range, masterful orchestration, and unforgettable melodies, it continues to prove that great film music belongs just as much on the concert stage as it does in the cinema.

*Program notes written by Kathy Boster
Edited by Eva Langfeldt*

Soprano Soloist Heidi Moss Erickson

We welcome back Heidi Moss Erickson, who performed with LAS in May 2016 and April 2022. She has appeared with numerous other BayArea companies, including Opera Parallèle, Oakland Symphony, Peninsula Symphony, Diablo Symphony, Fremont Symphony, Livermore Valley Opera, Opera San Jose, and the Sacramento Choral Society. She is a champion of new music and has collaborated with several renowned composers including David Conte, Daron Hagen, Jake Heggie, Kurt Erickson (who also is her spouse), Henry Mollicone, Tarik O'Regan, and Erling Wold. She has also received recognition in major vocal competitions, including the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions; the Liederkrantz Awards; the MacAllister Awards; and the KDFC competition, which resulted in a performance with pianist Lang Lang. In 2019 she was awarded the prestigious "Best in the Bay" award for her Richard Strauss recital. Moss Erickson holds bachelor's degrees in voice and biology from Oberlin College (where she and Lara Webber met) and a master's degree in biochemistry from the University of Pennsylvania. She was a research scientist for ten years before relocating to the Bay area and pursuing a music career. She became interested in the science of singing when stricken with a rare facial paralysis in 2007, leaving the right side of her face partially paralyzed. This inspired her to learn more about the relationship between vocal physiology and facial musculature, which she teaches to her voice students.



photo: Marc Olivier LeBlanc

Music Director Lara Webber

Lara Webber is dedicated to inspiring audiences and community engagement through the power of symphonic music. She has been praised by fellow musicians for her musical depth, genuine expression, strong personal vision, and collaborative spirit. Now in her eleventh season as music director and conductor of LAS, she has brought music to Tri-Valley elementary schools, coached chamber musicians, and advocated for the arts.

Webber holds degrees in music from Oberlin and USC and has held the positions of both assistant and associate conductor of the symphony orchestras of Baltimore and Charleston and music director of the Charleston Symphony Orchestra Chorus. She is music director of the Palo Alto Philharmonic. Her guest-conducting activities have included multiple performances with the symphonies of Houston, Pittsburgh, Santa Barbara, and Modesto, among others. She has served as cover conductor for the San Francisco Symphony and the National Symphony Orchestra and was a conductor of the Emmy-nominated Disney's Young Musicians Symphony Orchestra. Her operatic associations include posts as assistant conductor at Glimmerglass Opera and conductor of the Baltimore Opera Studio.



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Contact Judy Eckart: judy@justjudy.com

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Youth Orchestra Concert July 26

The Livermore-Amador Symphony Youth Orchestra’s 2025 concert is on Saturday July 26 at 7 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church in Livermore. Good music, and free of charge.

Competition for Young Musicians

The next LAS Competition for Young Musicians will be held on October 12. The winners will perform as soloists with the Symphony on February 14, 2026, and will be awarded \$750.00. Piano and string applicants must be 19 or younger as of February 14, 2026; vocal, wind, brass, percussion, and harp applicants must be 22 or younger as of Feb. 14, 2026. Applications for the competition will be accepted starting on September 21, 2025. Please see details on the Youth Competition page of the LAS website.

Livermore-Amador Symphony is a member of the Livermore Cultural Arts Council and a resident company of the Bankhead Theater.

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