

What's Playing at HEHS!

'Mars' from 'The Planets' by Gustav Holst

Gustav Holst was a British composer best known for his orchestral suite 'The Planets'. A suite is a group of individual pieces. There are seven pieces in 'The Planets' and 'Mars, the Bringer of War' is the first one.

In ancient Roman religion Mars was the god of war. Holst composed this piece in anticipation of the outbreak of World War One. It's a march but an unusual one. Normally a march has 4 beats in a bar so you can say "left, right, left, right" but Mars has 5 beats in a bar; tricky to march to!

Listen out for: the opening two harps, strings playing with the wood of the bow, timpani using very hard-headed sticks and the gong. There's also a solo from the euphonium.

Horn Concerto No. 4 (3rd movement) by Mozart

<https://youtu.be/gvFNY45C33g>

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was an Austrian composer and performer who could play and write music from the age of four!

A concerto is a piece for a solo instrumentalist and orchestra. A concerto shows off the skill of the soloist.

Mozart's friend Joseph Leutgeb was a famous horn player. Leutgeb inherited a cheese shop in Vienna and might have become a cheesemonger if Mozart hadn't written such fabulous concertos for him to play!

Horns of the time were very difficult to play because they didn't have valves (buttons) to press. Mainly horns were used to play hunting fanfares but being a horn player on a hunt was hazardous - you had to ride a horse and play at the same time!

Listen out for: the times when the orchestra 'answer' the horn by repeating the same tune.