

Twelve Celestial Vignettes
Duodecim Imagi Cælestes
Δωδεκα Εικοναι Ουρανιαι
Douze Vignettes Célestes
Dodici Vignette Celestiali

I. The Sun ☉ Rules Leo ♌

In lucem luculentam Solis “Into the brilliant light of the Sun”

For C Flute, Clarinet in A, Violin and Violoncello. This movement harnesses the consciousness, will, vitality and creativity of the heat and light of the sun. Ruled by the element of fire, the music surges upward towards a higher goal, a further fuel to transform to a higher energy level. I have chosen the Dorian mode to represent fire’s transformative, yet stabilizing powers.

II. The Moon ☾ Rules Cancer ♋

Reflections in the Sea

For C Flute, Clarinet in A, Violin and Violoncello. This movement has been designed to capture the light from the sun, to reflect it off its own surfaces, and to implicate characteristics of habit, emotion, and the subconscious. In measures 9 and 10, the violin has a statement from the first movement woven into the texture. Ruled and ruling the element of water, the music ebbs and flows, drips and cascades towards a serene cradle. I have chosen a play between a do-pentatonic and an octatonic scale, both centered on d-flat to represent the subtleties and plays of light of water.

III. Mercury ☿ Rules Gemini and Virgo ♊ ♍

Ἑρμῆς: φως πυρσος ἀγγελοῦ *Mercurius: Lux ruber nuntii* *Hermes: Red light of the messenger*

For C Flute. Hermes is the trickster god, the god of communication, thoughts, and transportation. The movement begins with the sound of a typewriter clicking out its message, and the subsequent music is the journey of the messenger en route to delivery. The transition from key-slaps to playing need not be in tempo. The piece is quick, but not rushed, meticulous, but not slowed by the effort. Ruled by the element of air, an element of thought and unseen flux, the music is light, but relentless. It ends with a new message being created for transmission. I have chosen the Lydian mode to represent the flightiness and playfulness of the air, as well as the element of the fourth as a basic, mind-driven interval.

IV. Venus ♀ Rules Taurus and Libra ♉ ♌

Elle va avec toute la grace nacrée des étoiles... “She moves with all the pearly grace of the stars...”

For Violin. Venus, the goddess of desire and love, is accompanied by the concepts of value and money. This movement is the dance of the planet across the sky, the dance of the woman who catches everyone’s eye, the dance of the bow across the strings. It is music of sensuality and grace, rubato and tenuto, with the lover’s sigh towards the end, flowing back into the swirl of the dance. Ruled by the element of earth, it is a dance of bare feet against solid, but soft soil. I have chosen the Mixolydian mode to display the grounded, optimistic creativity found in the exchange of glances across a dimly-lit room.

V. Earth ⊕ Does not rule any signs of the Zōdiakós

Gaia's Womb

For Alto Flute and B-flat Clarinet. This is one of two movements which do not rule signs of the Zodiac, so are not intrinsically associated with any of the four basic western elements, fire, water, air, and earth. This pastoral evokes the gentle sway of a mother basking in the awe of her child, the gentle turning of our planet in its heavenly pirouette, turning and returning to similar situations and places, but always in different times and spaces.

VI. Mars ♂ Rules Aries ♈ (Co-rules Scorpio ♏)

Crimson Strength to Achieve All Things

For Violoncello. The Red Planet is the yang (sun, masculine) to the yin (moon, feminine) of Venus. The music of this movement evokes action, physical energy and drive. It is a planet of fire, resting mostly in the Dorian scale in honor of the element, but with the agility, the passion to extend beyond. The end of the movement borrows the gestures which open and close the Venus movement, bringing action and determination to the motif.

VII. Jupiter ♃ Rules Sagittarius ♐ (Co-rules Pisces ♋)

A Jovial Connection in the Present

For Bass Flute, B-flat Clarinet, Violin and Violoncello. This movement was inspired by the Adagio from Mozart's Wind Serenade No. 10 in B-flat; to me, the texture evoked expansion and growth, and this is what I have borrowed from Mozart. Being a ruling planet for a fire sign, I have used the Dorian mode, with its optimistic major sixth to help the feeling of occupying more space and presence, being as the first harmonic movement has the bass falling a whole step. The entire movement is designed to provoke feelings of expanse; it begins with all of the musicians playing quite closely together, and ends fuller, farther apart, all whole while the clarinet soars like the moons of Jupiter above pulsing strings and a reliable bass.

VIII. Saturn ♄ Rules Capricorn ♐ (Co-rules Aquarius ♒)

The Onus Rests Upon You

For Violin and Violoncello. This movement seeks to evoke a playful and light-heartedness in accepting maturity and responsibility without qualm. In contrast to the previous movement, the two parts tend to contract towards each other, falling into place and working together to create the melody. The use of parallel fourths and fifths, as well as the use of the seventh add playfulness to the music, they are wide, optimistic intervals that bring out a joyful and carefree quality. Capricorn being an earth sign, this piece ends in the Mixolydian mode, and is a bit of a surprise, though the final has been stressed throughout the movement. The *col legno* passages are in honor of the element of earth, allowing the wood to bring forth the sound, with the added resonance of the hair of the bow.

III

IX. Chiron ☿ Does not rule any signs of the Zōdiakós

The Wounded Healer Bathed in Green Light

For Alto Flute, Bass Clarinet, Violin and Violoncello. Chiron is the centaur who took Aesclepius (who became a god of healing) under his wing and taught him the arts of healing. Chiron, though a healer, was wounded and could not heal himself, and thusly this satellite of the sun suggests both healing *and* pain, subversion *and* regeneration. The transformation from pain into healing is important, as well as their deep connection, which is why the music rocks between comfort and discomfort and the flute (imitated later by the violoncello) has a very important arrival note which begins with a tremolo, like a shudder that slowly transforms into a purer tone, transcending pain, turning darkness into light. The last two measures are an eclipse of the entire piece, a sudden shock of darkness that the healer has instantly transformed into brilliant consciousness.

X. Uranus ♅ Rules Aquarius ♒

Carefully Planned Serendipity, It Can Happen...

For Piccolo, B-flat Clarinet, Violoncello and Bell. The Bell is tuned to a B-flat in any high octave, and can be played on anything ranging from a bell or singing bowl to a handbell, glockenspiel or celesta. *Ouranos*, the sky father of Greek Mythology, is the ruling planet of Aquarius, the water-bearer. This air sign is invoked by wind sounds made with both the clarinet and the violoncello. The clarinet evokes the sound of rising and falling wind, whereas the sounds on the violoncello are ephemeral, farther away, much like this planet—sounds of the wisps of wind through trees, and the sound of wind howling. The bell evokes the very spiritual and thoughtful side of this planet, as does the piccolo's percussive rhythm. The title plays on the thought that perhaps nothing is coincidence, and that which seems like chaos may only be a part of a greater consciousness working in its mysterious way. As with the third movement, this air element is described through the Lydian mode and the questioning, searching, reasoning interval of the fourth. The juxtaposition of a Turkish nine-eight rhythm (2+2+2+3) against the violoncello's more direct approach to nine-eight creates a seemingly chaotic space in which all of the instruments are working within the same frame, but painting different parts of the picture. The middle section sees the howling of the wind (violoncello), the floating of the air through all space and time (clarinet), and the playful object of the mind darting about the element (piccolo). The ending is a fresh breeze, blown in with new thought and direction, heralded by the bell.

XI. Neptune ♆ Rules Pisces ♷

The Wheel Fortuna Turns

For Piccolo, Violin and Violoncello. Neptune, the ruler of the seas, flirts with being the farthest planet from the Earth. This movement sets up a very delicate echo and slight sustain between the piccolo and the violin. The violoncello drips like water filling a basin, and surging forth when the basin has overflowed. The fluidity of water has again been called forth with the play between a pentatonic scale (plus a flat six) and an octatonic scale, both centered on d-flat.

XII. Pluto ♇ Rules Scorpio ♏

Cade la sera: nell'ombra lei trova della serenità “Evening falls: in the shadow she finds serenity”

For Clarinet in A. This final movement is about finding comfort in a moment, a space, of loneliness. What few sounds there are evoke passion, intensity, and at the end, regeneration. The pitch classes previously used for the element of water are still called into play. In the middle of this movement, the performer is called to, essentially, scream to the universe of her presence. And then to gasp, as though afraid someone might have noticed, for she wishes to be alone, and does not want to call attention to herself; like a wounded animal, she needs time to withdraw and heal. The final gesture is first an inward sob, and finally an inward sigh of relief and peacefulness.