

# Daughter's biography of Holst economical, accurate

**Gustav Holst: A Biography**  
Imogen Holst  
Oxford, 210 pp

review by Mike Spindloe

Imogen Holst's biography of her father was originally published in 1938 and now appears for the first time in a paperback edition. Holst could hardly have requested a more sympathetic biographer than his daughter, a fellow musician whom he remained close to throughout his life, and we could hardly request a more reliable source for information about the life of one of the most famous English composers.



Gustav Holst at 47: The English composer is best remembered for his *The Planets*.

Ms. Holst traces her father's life and career with admirable honesty and brevity, neither glossing over his many failures nor dwelling overly long on his successes. She relies heavily on letters from Holst to his wife, herself and friends, especially Ralph Vaughan Williams, to assist her. This technique works because Holst seems to have been a dedicated and skillful letter writer.

She also includes, as an appendix, an essay Holst wrote in 1920 entitled "The Mystic, the Philistine and the Artist," in which Holst carries on an illuminating "conversation" about the perception of form in art among other things. This essay, as well as much of the other material in the book, shows Holst to be highly sensitized to his role as a composer and artist and the difficulties inherent in that role; in the essay he asserts that mystic, philistine and artist exist in everyone in degrees.

Ms. Holst's own prose is at times rather stiff and outdated-sounding, written in a strictly formal English that sounds at least slightly anachronistic only 50 years after it was written. She also takes poetic license with irrelevant asides like, "but now he was utterly lost, and he gazed at her in despair," referring to Holst in love.

The facts, however, are there, from Holst's failed attempts to have his music published, the sudden acclaim which followed the success of *The Planets*, his love of teaching and composing, his refusal to accept most awards and accolades (including several offers of honorary degrees) and the health problems which plagued his later years.

# FM 88 CJSR Weekly playlist

WEEK ENDING JANUARY 4, 1989

THIS LAST WEEKS  
WEEK WEEK ON

1	3	5	Waterboys - Fisherman's Blues
2	1	4	R.E.M. - Green
3	5	6	Sonic Youth - Daydream Nation
4	6	3	Sons of Freedom - Self-titled
5	-	1	Gruesomes - Hey
6	11	2	Pixies - Surfer Rosa
7	2	4	Ministry - Land of Rape and Honey
8	8	3	Murray McLachlan - Swinging on a Star
9	-	1	Bookmen - Vol. 1: Delicatessen
10	1	1	Ray Charles - Just Between Us
11	4	4	Katie Webster - Swamp Boogie Queen
12	9	3	Chet Atkins - CGP
13	-	1	Julian Cope - My Nation Underground
14	-	1	Various Artists - Human Music
15	-	1	Momus - The Tender Pervert
16	-	1	SNFU - Better Than a Kick in the Eye
17	-	1	Al Stewart - Last Days of the Century
18	7	6	Guerilla Welfare - Rhesus Pieces
19	14	6	Mary Margaret O'Hara - Miss America
20	16	2	Johnny Johnson - Blue Hand Johnny

EPs

1	5	5	Stompin' Tom Connors - Lady KD Lang
2	-	1	Shuffle Demons - Father Hipness
3	7	2	Argument Club - Dance of the Green Monkeys
4	1	5	Resolute Bay - Go to the Mall
5	-	1	Markie Moose... - Auld Lang Syne
6	6	5	Black Betty - Tails
7	2	5	Roots Roundup - Move Your Feet
8	4	7	Grant Hart - 2541 (EP)
9	-	1	Kev-Ski - Hanky Panky
10	-	1	U2 - Desire

What emerges most strongly is Holst's love of life and his buoyant nature. He learned early on to accept negative criticism; in fact, he often suggested that it was when people started liking him that he would have to start worrying. He was apparently fascinated with death, but his lows were creative dry spells rather than

serious depression.

In general, Ms. Holst's biography is an entertaining and enlightening read. It passes by all too quickly, with Holst's 60 years covered in only 200 or so pages. The list of published works, which has been updated to 1985, is useful, showing many works not included in his Opus lists.

# R.A.T.T.

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
★	★	★	★	★	★	★
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
DESIGNATED DRIVER PROGRAM	MARGARITA MONDAY	TUESDAY IS MOVIE NIGHT 7:30 AIRPLANE 10:00 CADDYSHACK	LADIES NIGHT	LET THE GOOD TIMES ROCK 19 GREAT BAR STAFF '60's & '70's CLASSIC ROCK N' ROLL	ECLECTIC MUSIC NIGHT	ECLECTIC MUSIC NIGHT
15	16	17	18	25	26	27
RATT STAFF AND YOUR STUDENTS' UNION	PEACH RASPBERRY STRAWBERRY BLUEBERRY BLACKBERRY	7:30 ANGEL HEART 10:00 EXORCIST	LADIES RECEIVE HAPPY HOUR PRICES	5 DAILY BEER & DRINK SPECIALS GREAT TIME	CLASSIC R & B GOOD PEOPLE	CO-SPONSOR CJSR FM 88.5 LIVE MUSIC WHEN AVAILABLE
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
WISH YOU THE BEST OF TIMES ALL THE TIME	ON SPECIAL ALL DAY BY THE GLASS OR BY THE PITCHER	7:30 WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE 10:00 A BOY AND HIS DOG	ALL DAY AND ALL NIGHT	CLASSIC R & B GOOD PEOPLE	CLASSIC R & B GOOD PEOPLE	CO-SPONSOR CJSR FM 88.5 LIVE MUSIC WHEN AVAILABLE
28	29	30	31			
ENJOY YOUR SCHOOLING!	ON SPECIAL ALL DAY BY THE GLASS OR BY THE PITCHER	7:30 BACK TO THE FUTURE 10:00 TIN MEN	ALL DAY AND ALL NIGHT			SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE RADIO

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