

Gustav Holst



Gustav Holst was born at 4 Pittville Terrace in 1874 to Adolphus von Holst, a piano teacher and his wife Clara. Holst's mother died in 1882 from heart disease when he was only eight years old.

Holst and his little brother Emil were looked after by their aunt Nina, who along with his father, taught

him how to play the piano and compose music. He attended Cheltenham Grammar School (now Pate's Grammar School) and, when he was twenty

one years old, he held his first concert at the Montpellier

Rotunda (now Lloyds TSB). He then studied music composition at the Royal College of Music in London and became a music teacher at St Paul's Girls' School in London.



Whilst working as a music teacher, Holst wrote many pieces of music. His most famous collection

of music was *The Planets* suite, written between 1914 and 1917. This consisted of seven very different pieces of music, each representing the different 'personalities' of the planets. The most famous piece is *Jupiter: Bringer of Jollity*, a section of which is used as the theme for Rugby world cups.

Although he was unfit for military service in the First World War, in 1918 Holst joined the YMCA Education Department, helping to



organise music activities in military training camps, hospitals and prisoner of war camps. In order to avoid suspicion over his nationality, Holst agreed to drop the 'von' from his name, although he discovered that the family had never been entitled to it in the first place.



In 1927, Holst was honoured by his home town of Cheltenham with a two hour concert of his work, including *The Planets*, held in the Town Hall. Amongst the crowd were old school friends, violinists who had played with his father Adolphus and some very old ladies who had been taught music by his grandfather Gustavus.



Holst continued to write teach and write music, although his health deteriorated in the last years of his life. He died in 1934 at the age of fifty nine and his ashes were interred at Chichester Cathedral.