

Mars in Retrograde
SSA, piano
JH-GRL19

Amy Gordon

pdf - \$1.95
printed - \$3.30

Mars in Retrograde

Amy Gordon

for SSA choir and piano



COMPOSE
LIKE A GIRL

Illustration: KT Thompson

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From the Composer:

"Mars in Retrograde," commissioned by Kat Anderson and dedicated to The Los Angeles Belles, is a 3-part vocalise for SSA and piano based on planetary motion and gravitational orbits. The voices represent the orbits of the planets (S1 as Venus, S2 as Earth, and Alto as Mars) around the sun, which is represented by the Piano. Each planet (voice) has a distinct repeating rhythmic pattern whose length corresponds to each planet's sidereal period (how long it takes the planet to fully orbit around the sun). The repeating rhythmic pattern uses the musical technique of isorhythm, where a repeating rhythmic pattern (called the talea) is combined with separate pitch material (called the color). Venus's sidereal period is roughly .616 Earth years, corresponding to a 7.5 measure talea. Earth's sidereal period is 1 Earth year, corresponding to a 12 measure talea (based on the 12 months in a year). Mars' sidereal period is roughly 1.9 Earth years, corresponding to a 22.75 measure talea. Venus', Earth's, and Mars' taleas are shown below. The rhythmic activity increases until the mid-point of each talea, after which the rhythmic value decreases again. This represents how planets increase in speed as they approach their closest point to the sun (perihelion) and decrease in speed as they approach the farthest point from the sun (aphelion). The end of each talea is marked by planetary graphics in the score. The talea of each of the planets is below.

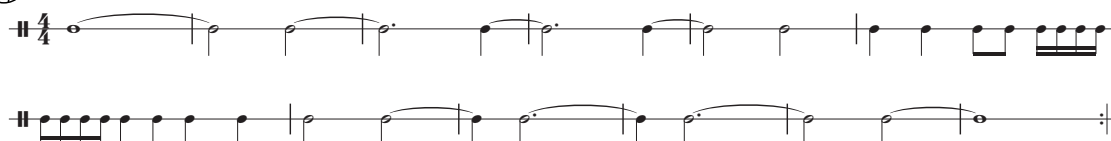
The entire piece is tuned to the fundamental of B \flat , as the lowest recorded note in the universe is a black hole that vibrates at a B \flat 57 octaves below Middle C. The piece exclusively uses the B \flat Lydian Dominant scale, also referred to as the acoustic scale, which can be created by assembling the first 12 partials of the overtone series based on the fundamental of B \flat .

- Amy Gordon

Talea of Venus: ~7.5 measures



Talea of Earth: 12 measures



Talea of Mars: ~22.75 measures



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~ Jocelyn Hagen



Amy Gordon is an active composer, arranger, songwriter, and vocalist based in Los Angeles, CA. As a choral composer, she has worked with and been commissioned by numerous choirs, including being the composer-in-residence for Nova Vocal Ensemble. She has also scored numerous films and webcasts. She has a BA in Composition from Loyola Marymount University and an MM in Composition from California State University, Long Beach.

Commissioned by Kat Anderson and dedicated to The Los Angeles Belles

Mars in Retrograde

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for SSA choir and piano

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Amy Gordon

Spaciously ♩ = 86

Soprano 1

Soprano 2

Alto

Spaciously ♩ = 86

Piano

ff
BANG!

loco
mp

f

Pedal very liberally

Vibrating, smearing

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6

Venus  gradually open from ooh to ah ***
stagger breath throughout
p cresc. poco a poco

S1 Ooh

Earth  gradually open from ooh to ah ***
stagger breath throughout
p cresc. poco a poco

S2 Ooh

Mars  gradually open from ooh to ah ***
stagger breath throughout
p cresc. poco a poco

A Ooh

mp
f

(8vb)

***The piece uses simple vowels such as oohs and ahs, but vocalists are free to experiment with different vowels and overtones as the parts increase and decrease in rhythmic speed.

12

f gradually close from ah to ooh
dim. poco a poco

S1 (ah)

f gradually close from ah to ooh
dim. poco a poco

S2 (ah)

A

(8vb)

16  *p* *gradually open from ooh to ah*
cresc. poco a poco

f *gradually close from ah to ooh*
dim. poco a poco

S1 (ah) _____

S2 *p* _____
(Ooh) _____

A *f* *gradually close from ah to ooh*
dim. poco a poco
(ah) _____



(8vb)

21  *p* *gradually open from ooh to ah*
cresc. poco a poco

p *gradually open from ooh to ah*
cresc. poco a poco

S1 (Ooh) _____ Ooh _____

S2 *p* *gradually open from ooh to ah*
cresc. poco a poco
Ooh _____

A _____



(8vb)

27

gradually close from ah to ooh
f dim. poco a poco *p*

S1 (ah) (Ooh)

S2 (ah) (Ooh)

A (Ooh)

(8vb)

33

S1

S2

A

mf loco

3

3

3

3

(8vb)

37  *mp* *cresc. poco a poco* *f* *dim. poco a poco* 

S1 Ooh _____ (ah)

S2  *mp* *cresc. poco a poco* Ooh _____

A  *mp* *cresc. poco a poco* Ooh _____

mp *f*

(8vb)

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43 *mp*  *mp* *cresc. poco a poco* *f* *dim. poco a poco* 

S1 _____ (ooh) Ooh _____ (ah)

S2 *f* *dim. poco a poco* *mp*  (ah) _____ (Ooh) _____

A _____ *f* *dim. poco a poco* (ah)

f *dim. poco a poco*

(8vb)

49

S1 *p* *gradually open from ooh to ah*
cresc. poco a poco (Ooh) Ooh

S2 *p* *gradually open from ooh to ah*
cresc. poco a poco Ooh

A

(8vb)

55

S1 *mf* *dim. poco a poco* *p* *gradually close from ah to ooh*
(ah) (Ooh)

S2 *mf* *dim. poco a poco* *p* *gradually close from ah to ooh*
(ah) (Ooh)

A *p* *gradually close from ah to ooh*
(Ooh)

(8vb)

6

Spinning Forward ♩. = 66

61

S1 *mp* Ah

S2 *mp* Ah

A *mp* Ah

Spinning Forward ♩. = 66

mp

(8^{vb})

69

S1 *pp* *pp*
Oh

S2 *pp* *pp*
Oh

A *pp* *pp*
Oh

mp 3 R.H. cross *8vb* R.H. cross *8vb*

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73 *pp* *p* *pp*
Ooh

S2 *pp* *p* *pp*
Ooh

A *pp* *p* *pp*
Ooh

ppp 8 *8va* *8vb*

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j o c e l y n h a g e n



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