

Popular Music of Planet X for Piano Quintet

(chamber version of *Symphony No. 1*) Duration: about 26'

Composed September 1990; 2004; Feb. 10—May 27, 2015; Nov. 2—Dec. 8, 2023

for Eric Pritchard

In 1990 I wrote several works for my friend Fred Robinson (no relation), who was the composer/arranger at Warner Robins Air Force Base in Georgia. Among these was a work for jazz band, *The Popular Music of Planet X*. The idea was the rather whimsical one that somewhere among the myriad planets there could be a civilization where music like this could actually be commercially successful. Clearly, such a planet must be far, far away. I also wrote some chamber works, including a brass quintet. The Air Force didn't seem to appreciate the effort, and the scores and parts were returned. (When you bomb with the Air Force...you *REALLY BOMB!*)

In 2004 I wrote new versions of these scores, but still could not find performance. Thus in 2015 I started over, this time with *PMPX* as a symphony for concert band. The only surviving movement from the old *PMPX* was the bulk of *Burlesque* (then titled *Bump and Grind*). The first movement was originally from the now-defunct brass quintet of 1990 and 2004. The second movement's opening was from the original *PMPX*, and has a chamber version for piano and woodwind quintet. The third movement was from the *Clarinet Sextet*.

As the piece remained unperformed, I realized it would be better for orchestra as *Symphony No. 1: Popular Music of Planet X*. Orchestral writing is much more to my taste and experience than band. I first composed this piano quintet version to make various improvements, and to get the piece performed and recorded. The third movement is new, inspired by a few bits from the original third movement from 1990. The four movements of the band version of *PMPX* from 2015 are now offered only as separate works.

Considering that this is my personal vision of what music intended for mass consumption could be in a more ideal world, I've allowed the influence of some popular idioms. However, as is true for all of my music, this is in the classical tradition, with no improvisation, and to be treated in the same way as other "serious" art music—even, and perhaps especially, when it's intended to be for fun.

Cover; London casino, 1938

Bill Robinson

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