

# WAR OF THE WORLDS

Adapted & Directed  
by Yuval Sharon  
Music by Annie Gosfield

NOV 12 2pm | NOV 18 12pm, 2pm

WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL  
— and —  
DTLA locations



LA PHIL

GUSTAVO DUDAMEL  
Music & Artistic Director

[www.waroftheworlds.la](http://www.waroftheworlds.la)



@\_waroftheworlds

# WAR OF THE WORLDS

NOV 12, 2017 2pm  
NOV 18 12pm, 2pm

## Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group

**Yuval Sharon**, *director*

**Christopher Rountree**, *conductor*

**Jonathan Deans**, *concept sound designer*

**David Bullard**, *concert hall sound designer*

**Jody Elff**, *siren sites sound designer*

**Calder Greenwood**, *production designer*

**Jaymee Ngerwichit**, *costume designer*

**Pablo Santiago**, *lighting designer*

**Lara Helena**, *alien choreographer*

## **Annie GOSFIELD** *War of the Worlds*

(world premiere, LA Phil commission with generous support from Margaret Morgan and Wesley Phoa in honor of the Deborah Borda Women in the Arts Initiative)

Adapted and directed by Yuval Sharon

“Venus” lyrics in Scene 4 by Annie Gosfield  
Spanish translation in Scene 4 by Suzanna Guzmán

Co-produced by The Industry and NOW Art  
The *War of the Worlds* radio play by Howard Koch used by permission of Peter Koch

Programs and artists subject to change.

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## WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL

Sigourney Weaver, *Narrator*

Hila Plitmann, *La sirena*

David Castillo, *Officer*

James Hayden, *Commander / Sound Designer*

Jon Keenan, *Gunner / Stage Hand*

Elise Shope Henry, *flute / alto flute*

Carolyn Hove, *oboe*

Don Foster, *clarinet / bass clarinet*

Shawn Mouser, *bassoon*

Ryan Darke, *trumpet*

David Rejano, *trombone*

Randall Montgomery, *tuba*

James Barbor, Tyler Stell, *percussion 1*

Perry Dreiman, Eduardo Meneses, *percussion 2*

Lisa Edwards, *piano / organ / sampler*

Mark Kashper, Rochelle Abramson, Rebecca Reale, *violin 1*

Michele Bovyer, Stacy Wetzel, Nickolai Kurganov, *violin 2*

Ben Ullery, Minor L. Wetzel, Victor de Almeida, *violins*

Dahae Kim, Jonathan Karoly, Jason Lippmann, *cellos*

Oscar M. Meza, *bass*

“La Sirena” Ensemble: Joanne Pearce Martin, *Theremin / sampler*  
Matthew Howard, *percussion for live Foley*

## **SIREN 1: PROFESSOR PIERSON**

135 South Olive Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012

Hugo Armstrong, *Professor Pierson*

Joanna Lynn-Jacobs, *Starshine Meadows*

David Garrett, *cello*

Clayton Farris, *actor*

Milosz Karubin, Jeremy Hahn, Briella Deruise  
and Hannah Grigereit, *alien dancers*

## **SIREN 2: MRS. MARTINEZ**

416 S. Main Street, Los Angeles, CA 90013

Suzanna Guzmán, *Mrs. Martinez*

Estella Ramos, *Acting Secretary of the Interior*

Joanna Lynn-Jacobs, *Dr. Melissa Morse*

Jin-Shan Dai, *violin*

Jory Herman, *bass*

Gabriel Romero, *actor*

Stephen Beitler, Cesar Sosa, Kate Spare and

Talia Schulz, *alien dancers*

## **SIREN 3: GENERAL LANSING**

719 S. Hill St., Los Angeles, CA 90014

Hadleigh Adams, *General Lansing*

Jeffrey Grant, Cory Hills, Nicholas Stoup, *percussion*

Carolyn Michelle Smith, Ross Steeves, Cheryl Umaña, *actors*

Myles Brewer, Jen Haley, Jessica Kittridge

and Ottavio Taddei, *alien dancers*

Artist and performer bios can be found at [www.waroftheworlds.la/bios](http://www.waroftheworlds.la/bios)

## CAN MUSIC LIE?

*Notes from the Director*

When reality is no longer distinguishable from reality television, you cannot blame anyone for turning to music as an escape. Because “music doesn’t lie,” according to Jimi Hendrix – a quote I’ve also seen attributed to Mozart. Attending a symphonic concert or opera connects us to a rich humanistic tradition and brings us together as a community to sit quietly, to examine, to *listen*.

But the more the concert hall retreats from everyday life, the more isolated and irrelevant it threatens to become – especially in moments of crisis. Rather than awakening us to demand more from ourselves – individually and as a community – a rote concert experience satiates us with an addiction to values we (wrongly) assume are unassailable. Instead of emerging from the concert hall emboldened to face the challenges of our reality, concertgoers are numbed to believe that everything external will eventually work itself out, with no action required on our part.

“Sit back, relax, and enjoy the music” – it’s the clichéd imperative that audiences carry with them into a passive attitude

towards daily life. At times like ours, we need a different imperative: “sit up, wake up, and listen carefully.”

*War of the Worlds* challenges the assumption that the concert hall is a protected realm, impervious to the life of the street. An innocuous musical presentation – Annie’s twisted take on Holst’s perennial *The Planets* – is interrupted by alarming reports from the streets of Los Angeles of an alien invasion. The ensemble on the stage of Walt Disney Concert Hall and the three ensembles outside the hall eventually perform together in a coda that unifies all locations into one shared event. There is no privileged perspective: each of the various sites has its own individual viewpoint on the work as a whole.

I developed the concept to “rebroadcast” *War of the Worlds* during The Industry’s *Hopscotch*, which also explored a vision of simultaneity in time and space within the temporality of Los Angeles’s street life. But the catalyst for this idea carries a much more sinister significance: this project spun out from the prompt to activate the 200 decommissioned air raid sirens that still loom over the landscape of Los Angeles. Tanner Blackman, the former planning director for Councilmember Huizar’s office, and Carmen Zella, Co-founder & Creative

Director of NOW Art, had the idea of hacking these historic, silent relics and turning them into a platform for sound art. For me, the idea was most interesting in establishing a two-way communication – not simply repeating a sense of a centralized musical force disseminating onto the street, but a merging of inside and outside the concert hall. It became a fascinating formal experiment that allowed us to explore increasingly pressing concerns: the role of music in times of crisis, the relationship of the concert hall and urban life, and the crucial need to question what we hear in a time of “fake news.”

Although the production relies on state-of-the-art sound technology, the experience is focused on a “retro” medium – audio only – to activate the “theater of the imagination” presented by radio dramas like Orson Welles’ original broadcast. We have purposefully resisted a video stream connecting the various sites; no images can corroborate whether what you are hearing is actually happening. Instead, each audience member, put into a disorienting relationship with a series of disembodied voices, is challenged with the same increasingly difficult task we face every day of distinguishing fact from fabrication. Because if music doesn’t lie, we should prove that claim ourselves. – **Yuval Sharon**



## WAR OF THE WORLDS

*Notes from the Composer*

A nine-year-old girl was playing stickball in the street in Flatbush, Brooklyn, in 1938. Suddenly her father threw open the door on East 2nd St. and yelled “Something’s happening, come inside!” My mother, always the skeptic, came indoors and replied “Aw, nothing’s happening” but she still remembers the jittery buzz caused by the broadcast of *War of the Worlds*.

When I lived in Los Angeles in the 1980s, I was fascinated by the air raid sirens that stood virtually unnoticed throughout the city. They were largely silent, except for the occasional Reagan-era cold war paranoia air raid test, but the thrill of hearing their rare howl superseded the nagging anxiety that the alarm might actually signal nuclear war. Naturally I was very excited when the Los Angeles Philharmonic contacted me to discuss a mystery project with Yuval Sharon. Little did I know this dream project would be an opera that incorporated air raid sirens, Martians, radio noise, and a road trip to from Gardena to Sun Valley. Multiple trips to Los Angeles gave me a chance to get to know my partners in crime and to work with the performers, collecting Martian percussion sounds, wild organ timbres, and a few bars of Suzanna Guzmán singing in the voice of her octogenarian father.

Radio looms large. The 1938 radio broadcast of *War of the Worlds* featured a series of live performances of dance music from hotel ballrooms in New York City. In our opening group of pieces, ostensibly written for the centennial of *The Planets*, I wanted to evoke the crackling ambience of a radio orchestra performing a selection of dance numbers that shift through a cycle of interplanetary moods. *Mercury* serves as our opening theme, kicking off the show with a fast-paced sample-driven whirl that pays tribute to Sun Ra, King Tubby, and the sci-fi sounds of analog synthesis. *Venus*

employs James Hayden as the modern counterpart to a ballroom crooner, who sings a ballad about Venus, who longed to escape her lonely planetary existence, only to wind up reading *The Hollywood Star* (an astronomically titled gossip rag that was published in the basement of the Los Angeles apartment building where I lived years ago). *Earth* makes use of Disney Hall’s remarkable organ, focusing on its visceral, psychedelically low terrestrial frequencies, like an earthly ritual gone awry. Imaginary radio music influences rhythm and melody throughout the opera, issuing echoes from the ballroom, the atmosphere, and the airwaves.

The vocal pieces are the heart of *War of the Worlds*, written for a varied cadre of characters who are our eyes and ears outside of the concert hall. The Martian attack is seen from the vantage point of an astrophysicist, a restaurant owner, a meteorologist, an army general, the acting Secretary of the Interior, and a hippie, in a series of intimate settings, accompanied by one, two, or three musicians. A trio of unseen airmen sing from an invisible location circling the skies of Los Angeles, reporting their shifting positions and military maneuvers from three invisible bombers overhead, blending their radio transmissions with the fine musicianship of the Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group. My father was a bombardier in WWII, and whenever I hit a rough patch compositionally, I imagined him as one of those airmen, keeping the skies safe, sending encouragement, and protecting me from writer’s block.

Radio noise factors in too, and is deployed in the “interruptions” that transport us from the concert to the outside world. As the performance is wrested away from Walt Disney Concert Hall and thrown onto the streets of Los Angeles, on-site performers interact with static radio noise and 1938 era jammed radio signals, shifting in character and timbre, like a radio drifting between stations, evoking terrestrial

broadcasts mixed with a faraway Martian atmosphere. Radio noise and World War II era radio jamming has been a longtime fascination of mine and an important element in my work. Some of the source material for this piece came out of research that I conducted during a 2012 fellowship at the American Academy in Berlin.

The Martians are represented sonically by La Sirena ensemble, featuring Hila Plittman as the voice of the Martian; Joanne Pearce Martin on theremin, celesta, and sampler; and Matthew Howard on a variety of Martian-tinged percussion instruments. Their performance is beamed directly to three repurposed air raid sirens. The name “La Sirena” is inspired by the sirens of myth, not only for their siren song, but for their ability to transport themselves instantaneously, bringing the story of the interplanetary invasion to the luminous yellow cylinders in mysterious Martianese.

At times the orchestra in the concert hall is layered with musical reports from the streets, overlaid with Martian transmissions from air raid sirens. We never knew exactly how the different sources might align, so I thought in terms of music that had a forgiving margin for overlap, like an instantaneous interplanetary translation. The unknown, flying-by-the-seat-of-our-pants factors made this project an irresistible challenge.

I thank Yuval Sharon, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chris Rountree, The Industry, NOW Art, and all of our collaborators and performers. I’ve never had so much fun writing music. I was continually surprised that so much humor and freewheeling collaboration could spring from such a dark subject. Developing a piece based on “fake news” became unexpectedly relevant, adding another layer of menace and absurdity to this timely subject. – **Annie Gosfield**

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## LIBRETTO

### Scene 1: Introduction, “Mercury,” and First Interruption

NARRATOR

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, I'm Sigourney Weaver, and this is the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Music, as we know, has the power of conjuring worlds, both real and imaginary, what has been and what could be. Every time we gather in this magnificent building, we ascend to a higher plane where peace and compassion reign supreme. And tonight's program, with music by Annie Gosfield, will be no exception. The composer has taken the solar system as her theme, each movement taking us further from the sun and deeper into outer space. Silence plays a critical role in the pieces you will hear tonight, so we ask you to contribute to the music-making by turning your cellphones off completely. And now, let's go along with Christopher Rountree, the LA Philharmonic, and Ms. Gosfield as they take us first to “Mercury.”

*The orchestra begins playing a sweet piece on the topic “Mercury.” After a few minutes, the playing is interrupted by the return of the Narrator.*

NARRATOR

Ladies and gentlemen, I hate to interrupt your enjoyment of this wonderful music, but the LA Phil wanted you to be aware of some breaking news. It seems that several unexplained explosions were observed in the sky just over Los Angeles. Now don't panic, it doesn't appear to be a terrorist attack, but scientists are describing it as explosions of incandescent gas originating from the planet Mars and hurtling towards us at what they are calling quote an enormous velocity. There is a possibility that we may need to evacuate, so if you could take a moment to truly take note of your nearest exit, that would make that unfortunate event as efficient as possible. But really, there is nothing to worry about for the

moment, so let's carry on with “Mercury.”

*Music plays until the piece is complete. Applause. Orchestra stands for it. They sit back down and strike up the next piece.*

### Scene 2: “Venus” and Communication from Siren 1

*The next piece, “Venus,” begins, when a rumbling takes over the speakers. The conductor stops the concert, bewildered.*

NARRATOR

Sorry, ladies and gentlemen, truly, no need to panic. I don't have any information on what that unexpected rumbling sound you heard might be, but the National Meteorological Agency has ordered scientists to address all large gatherings throughout LA County. So Professor Pierson from the Mount Wilson Observatory has agreed to speak to us from the streets of Los Angeles to give us an update on exactly what is going on. Professor Pierson, are you there?

PIERSON

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. This is Professor Richard Pierson, calling from our temporary observation area at the Tinkertoy Parking Lot in downtown Los Angeles. I'm sure my interruption is not “music to your ears.” *(He laughs at his bad joke.)*

NARRATOR

I'm sorry, Professor Pierson, was that a pun?

PIERSON

Yes, pardon me, ladies and gentlemen, I know you all must be quite alarmed. No time for jokes, no sir.

NARRATOR

Professor, I'm reading reports of space debris dropping onto the streets of Los Angeles – is this true?

PIERSON

Yes – er well, something like that, yes. We rushed here as soon as we could to study it.

NARRATOR

What can you tell us about the object in question?

PIERSON

It is a cylindrical object on a pole in the sidewalk. Why it must have been here for decades, but I'll be darned if I ever noticed it before.

NARRATOR

And you believe this has some connection with that rumbling sound reported throughout the city?

PIERSON

That rumbling you heard emanated from this object just moments ago, quite unexpectedly. But what's really fascinating is that the high frequency radio waves this object is emitting are identical with those of the blasts we just recorded from Mars.

NARRATOR

Are you saying there is a connection between Mars and that unidentified object?

PIERSON (hesitant)

It would be conjecture for me at this point to make that connection.

NARRATOR

But this object could potentially offer proof of intelligent life on Mars?

PIERSON

I can assure you, Ms. Weaver, that contrary to the popular belief, we have no evidence of Mars supporting intelligent life. But you can rest assured that we are vociferously scouring the skies for any signs of further activity. I even set up a telescope right here, the one I normally use to observe the peaceful glimmer of the night sky. So if you hear a ticking, that's the vibration of the telescope's clockwork.

NARRATOR

Is there any suspicious activity on Mars right now, Professor?

## LIBRETTO

PIERSON

Oh no, nothing unusual right now, Ms. Weaver. A red disk swimming in a blue sea. Mars happens to be the point nearest the earth ... in opposition, as we call it.

NARRATOR

And Professor, for the benefit of our listeners, how far is Mars from earth?

PIERSON

Approximately forty million miles.

NARRATOR

Well, that seems a safe enough distance! So in a worst-case scenario, we should have plenty of time to run for cover. Thank you Professor Pierson. Now, enough interruptions, ladies and gentlemen! Let's return now, calmly, to the soothing world of music.

*The music to "Venus" starts up again. A booming sound is heard through the sirens – the live cymbal crash of the percussionist at Siren Site 3. Musicians look around anxiously, and the music peters out, but with the aggressive gestures of the conductor to keep playing, the music picks up steam again. As the music continues, we hear the voice of Pierson:*

PIERSON

Ms. Weaver? Ms. Weaver?

*Narrator enters. Music does not stop but continues as underscoring to the following dialogue.*

NARRATOR

Professor Pierson? Are you still connected?

PIERSON

Yes, I'm afraid I have an alarming new update. Another object identical to the one we are observing here has been identified in another part of downtown Los Angeles. This one made a pretty dramatic entrance: witnesses have reported seeing a blinding green flash in the sky over a span of several hundred miles, and a loud, metallic bang was heard as far north as Tarzana.

NARRATOR

That must have been the crash we heard.

PIERSON

A team from Mount Wilson is finding its way to the scene, but you know, the traffic is just awful, so it may be a while before we can give you a proper update.

NARRATOR

Thank you, Professor Pierson. We're all eager to hear from your correspondent as soon as they get on the scene.

PIERSON

Absolutely.

*Narrator exits – the music hasn't stopped. The conductor turns around, and up, with trepidation. The song is much more meekly sung. After a few moments, the Narrator returns.*

NARRATOR

Ladies and gentlemen...

*(The Narrator motions for the orchestra to stop.)*

Ladies and gentlemen – *(Motioning to imaginary patrons)* Please – please keep in your seat sir! Yes, ma'am, just stay where we are. No one needs to get antsy. KCRW's head meteorologist Dr. Melissa Morse made it to the scene of that second crash and can tell us exactly what is happening out there.

### **Scene 3: Communication with Morse and Martinez at Siren 2**

MELISSA MORSE

Am I coming through, Ms. Weaver?

NARRATOR

We hear you loud and clear, Dr. Morse. What can you see?

MORSE

Ladies and gentlemen, well, I ... I hardly know where to begin! This strange scene is like a Hollywood movie come to life. What I can see of the ... object in question sure doesn't look like a meteor, at least not any

meteor that I've seen. It looks like a piece of metal, a cylinder, mounted high on a pole.

NARRATOR

Can you describe it for us?

MORSE

The post supporting it is long and thin, like a telephone pole you might pass every day. ... But the metal structure on top is ... luminous, a shiny yellow, yet somehow ancient. The police are doing their best to keep the crowds away, but a crowd of people have gathered here with us.

NARRATOR

Did any of them witness the crash?

MORSE

Yes, I have an eye-witness standing by, a Mrs. Martinez, owner of the restaurant on the corner, La Luna Azul – which translates roughly to mean "The Blue Moon." Step closer, please, Mrs. Martinez. Had you ever seen the object in question before?

MARTINEZ (suddenly screaming)

*Niños! Quitense de allí!*

*(Kids! Get away from that thing!)*

MORSE (condescending)

Don't worry, ladies and gentlemen, my PhD was in Latin American literature. Sra. Martínez. *¿Alguna vez has visto ese cilindro de metal amarillo antes?*

*(Have you ever seen that yellow metal cylinder before?)*

MARTINEZ

*¿Mandé? That thing on the telephone pole?*

*(What, that thing on the telephone pole?)*

I come to this country 25 years ago and I never seen nothing like that.

MORSE

And you saw the explosion?

MARTINEZ (yelling at kids again)

Get away from that! *Ni saben de donde viene! Vayanse a casa!*

MORSE

Mrs. Martinez, can you please tell us what you saw?

MARTINEZ

*Pues ... I was listening to the radio...escuchaba la radio, media dormida...la música tan linda ... una balada bien suave...*

MORSE (translating)

She was half drowsing, listening halfway... The music was lovely, a ballad.

MARTINEZ

*... que cantaba mi padre...a song my father used to sing: "Munequita linda, de caballos de oro..."*

MORSE

–Did you see something?

MARTINEZ

I don't SEE nothing...*Lo oí!* I hear it! "Dime si me quieres..."

MORSE

What did you hear?

MARTINEZ

Like the sound of a kettle whistling, sssssss ... getting louder and louder, like the fire on the fourth of July.

MORSE

And then?

MARTINEZ

*La música se paró...And then the music stopped – and I hear a voice talking about la planeta Marte ... Fíjate! Mars! I look out the window, y sabes que? Asi como un sueño... un rayo verde ... ZOOM... Destelló a través del cielo!*

MORSE

... a green streak flashed across the sky!

MARTINEZ

*Despues un PÚN! Un golpe a la tierra!*

MORSE

Then bang! Something smacked the ground.

MARTINEZ

*¡Me tiró de la silla!*

MORSE

Knocked me clear out of my chair!

MARTINEZ

I think...*"Dios mio! Es el Grande!"* But it wasn't no earthquake...

MORSE

Maybe this is an alien?

MARTINEZ

*No! Cómo qué 'alien! No somos ilegales! My family works hard! My son is in college! My green card is good for two more years. We love this country!*

MORSE

No, Mrs. Martinez – is this object an extra-terrestrial?

MARTINEZ

*Como que 'extraterrestre'? Andalé, hablas de cine! De fantasía. But this thing, listen... sssilba!*

*("La Sirena", singing at Walt Disney Concert Hall, begins singing through the sirens on the street.)*

MORSE

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish you could see this fantastic scene. Hundreds of cars in back of us. Police trying to rope off the street but to no use. The people are breaking through. Braver souls are venturing towards the object, shielding their eyes from the yellow metal glare.

MARTINEZ

*Lo oyes? Canta!*

NARRATOR

Is that sound coming from the object?

MORSE (transfixed)

Listen! Can you hear it?

MARTINEZ

*Así ... HMMMMM ... (Singing along with the alien)*

MORSE

That sound – There's a hum, a resonant vibration emanating from the object. Let me get nearer ...

NARRATOR

Are you sure that's a good idea?

MORSE

Professor Pierson! Are you out there? This is no meteor! The metal casing is extraterrestrial, Smooth and cylindrical, Not of this earth!

MARTINEZ

*Que diablo en música tan bonita!*

MORSE &amp; MARTINEZ

What devil lives in such beautiful music!

*("La Sirena" becomes active with violent music.)*

MARTINEZ

Listen! *Tiene rábia...*He's mad!

MORSE

Wait! Something's happening! Ladies and gentlemen, the top of the cylinder is rotating, rising up slowly, like a turning screw!

MARTINEZ &amp; MORSE

It's moving!  
*Quedense atrás! Quedense atrás les digo. Te volverán ceniza!*  
*(Keep back, there! Keep back, I tell you! It's red hot, you'll burn to a cinder!)*

A clunking sound.

MORSE

The top is off! It's open!

## LIBRETTO

MARTINEZ

*Dios mio!! Dios de mi vida!!!*

(Sudden silence)

NARRATOR

Dr. Morse? Dr. Morse, can you hear us?

(Silence)

Professor Pierson?

PROFESSOR PIERSON

Yes, Ms. Weaver, I'm still here.

NARRATOR

What's happening out there?

PROFESSOR PIERSON

(suddenly serene)

Enjoy the music and stay calm!

You're safest right where you are!

NARRATOR

There, you heard Professor Pierson. Let's let music be our consolation and our distraction – the next planet in Ms. Gosfield's song cycle? "Earth."

### Scene 4: "Earth"

*Orchestra plays the piece "Earth". Suddenly feedback from a mic seems to be heard.*

CONDUCTOR (without stopping the orchestra)

Dave? Dave? We're getting feedback here!

(No response.)

DAVE!

SOUND DESIGNER (on the God mic)

There's no feedback on my end, Chris.

CONDUCTOR

Then what's that sound?

SOUND DESIGNER (on the God mic)

I have no idea.

(*The sound intensifies.*)

CONDUCTOR

It's getting worse! Dave, do something!

SOUND DESIGNER

It's some kind of interference, Chris – I'm afraid there's nothing I can do.

*The orchestra stops – the feedback gets louder. A moment of silence, then the orchestra begins a driving theme, as the Narrator enters again. From this point on, the orchestra in Walt Disney Concert Hall plays continuously as underscoring for the following dialogues between sirens.*

### Scene 5: General Lansing at Siren 3

NARRATOR

Ladies and gentlemen, the US army is mobilizing! I just read a report that the military is taking immediate steps to fight back against this strange invader. We've established a connection with General Lansing, commander of the state troops. General Lansing, are you there?

LANSING

This is Lansing of the signal corps. The situation arising from the presence of certain individuals of unidentified nature is now under control.

We have constructed a wall of defense

So all cause for alarm, if such cause ever existed, is now entirely unjustified.

*"La Sirena" becomes active and increasingly violent.*

Now the hunter becomes the hunted –

Our destiny made manifest!

Wait a minute: I see something on top of the cylinder. No, it's nothing but a shadow. Now the troops are on the edge of the site. Seven hundred armed men are closing in on the old metal tube. Wait, that wasn't a shadow! It's something moving ... a solid metal ... kind of shield rising up out of the cylinder ... It's going higher and higher. Why, it's standing on legs ... actually rearing up on a sort of metal framework. Now it's reaching above the trees. Our army is retreating! Run for cover! Run for— (*The connection breaks.*)

NARRATOR

General Lansing? General Lansing?

### Scene 6: Secretary of the Interior at Siren 2

NARRATOR

Ladies and gentlemen, astonishing news. It's now been confirmed that the strange beings who have been sighted around downtown LA are the vanguard of an invading army from the planet Mars. It seems the Martians have strategically placed nearly 200 forces in vessels all around the city. There is evidence that they have been silently looming above our city for as long as 70 years, waiting for a sign from their masters to awake.

Today, that signal was given from their home planet, and now the massive levathan of an army has risen up. Please don't attempt to leave this building, just outside these walls is utter chaos. We have a special radio broadcast from Estella Ramos in Washington, the Acting Secretary of the Interior, that we can play for you now. Roll the tape please.

SECRETARY

Citizens of the nation: I shall not try to conceal the gravity of the situation that confronts the country. Nor shall I underestimate the commitment of the US government to protect the lives and property of its people by any means necessary. However, I must impress upon you the urgent need of calm and resourceful action. Place your faith in our military, who, given time, will gather their superior resources, strategy, and intelligence to destroy the enemy. We must confront the deadly weapons of our adversary with a nation united, courageous, and dedicated to the preservation of human supremacy on this planet. Thank you, and God bless A—(the connection is cut.)

NARRATOR

Deadly weapons? What kind of weapon are we talking about? Professor Pierson, are you there? What do you know?

PROFESSOR PIERSON

Well I hate to call it a "heat ray," but in essence that's what this is. It's all too evident that these creatures have scientific knowledge far in advance of our own.

### **Scene 7: Commander Pilot Attack**

NARRATOR

My phone is blowing up with bulletins too numerous to read. Electricity and communication are out all over the city, but somehow the concert hall has been spared. Computer systems are being attacked with multiple hacks and are going haywire, spewing disinformation or simply shutting down. Astronomers report continued gas outbursts at regular intervals on planet Mars – and similar landings are happening all over the country, ladies and gentlemen. Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania... Invaders have been seen uprooting power lines, bridges, and railroad tracks.

Hold on – ladies and gentlemen, I just got this notification. (Short pause to read her phone.) Oh my God. OK, they're broadcasting the communication of the fighting forces, which are now heading directly into our city. Dave, switch it on!

*(The three characters – Officer, Gunner, Commander – singing live at Walt Disney Hall but out of sight)*

OFFICER

Range, thirty-two meters.

GUNNER

Thirty-two meters.

OFFICER

Projection, thirty-nine degrees.

GUNNER

Thirty-nine degrees.

COMMANDER

Air Force bomber, Victor-8-43, off Los Angeles – Lieutenant Voght, commanding eight bombers. Reporting to Commander Fairfax, Langham Field ... This is Voght,

reporting to Commander Fairfax, Langham Field ... Enemy tripod machines now in sight. A heavy black fog hanging close to the earth ... of extreme density, nature unknown. Evident objective is Downtown Los Angeles. They're pushing down a high tension power station.

OFFICER

Eight army bombers in engagement with enemy tripod machines over the Cahuenga Pass. Engines incapacitated by heat ray. All crashed. One enemy machine destroyed. Enemy now discharging heavy black smoke in direction of ...

GUNNER

Warning! Poisonous black smoke pouring in from the Valley. Reaches Lankershim. Gas masks useless. Urge population to move into open spaces ... Cars get off the road ...

*(Sudden, eerie calm – bells ring.)*

### **SCENE 8: Final Attack**

NARRATOR:

Why in God's name are those bells ringing?

PIERSON

Ms. Weaver, are you there?

NARRATOR:

Professor Pierson? You're alive!

PIERSON

Those bells you hear are ringing to warn the people to evacuate the city as the Martians approach. Avoid the I10 – hopelessly jammed. Our last defenses failed. Our army, artillery, air force, everything wiped out. We'll stay here to the end ... People are praying in the cathedral.

Streets are all jammed. It sounds like the last New Year's Eve in the city.

GUNNER / OFFICER / COMMANDER (simultaneous with Pierson / NARRATOR)  
2X2L... calling CQ... 2X2L... calling CQ... 2X2L... calling 8X3R... Come in, please...

PIERSON

Who knows, maybe if we let them rule  
We'll come to discover the aliens  
Are more humane than we are?

*A young hippie rushes the stage at Siren I.*

STARSHINE MEADOWS

This must be what it felt like  
To look across the sea  
And witness the approach  
Of a supernatural trinity:  
the Nina, the Pinta, the Santa Maria!

*"La Sirena" builds up steam again.*

PIERSON

Wait a minute ... The aliens are now in sight! Five of them ... The first crossing the concrete banks of the LA River. I can see it from here, wading...wading through the aqueduct ... He stands watching, looking over the city. His black head stands as high as the tops of the skyscrapers. He's waiting for the others. This is the end now. Smoke comes out ... black smoke, drifting over the city.

People in the streets see it now. They're running towards the East ... thousands of them. The smoke's spreading faster. It's reached City Hall.

People are trying to run away from it, but it's no use. They're falling like flies.  
Now the smoke's crossing Broadway ... Hill ... Grand ... one hundred yards away ... it's fifty feet ... God, have mercy!

GUNNER / OFFICER / COMMANDER (simultaneous with Pierson)  
Ready to strike! Ready to strike!

*Sound of an explosion – climactic music for "La Sirena." The Narrator ducks for cover. The orchestra at Walt Disney Concert Hall goes silent. Slowly the Narrator looks around. A Stage Hand runs on stage.*

## LIBRETTO

### STAGE HAND

The titanium of the building repelled the  
heat ray! We may be the last humans in  
Los Angeles – but we are saved!

### NARRATOR

The power of music has redeemed humanity  
once again!

### Scene 9: CODA

Chorus (all forces at all sirens and inside  
Walt Disney Concert Hall):  
Now we know  
That our world was being watched closely  
With envious eyes  
By a great intelligence,  
Vast, cool, and unsympathetic.  
Now we know  
That as human beings busied themselves  
With their various concerns,  
They were scrutinized and studied  
Like creatures under a microscope.  
People going to and fro  
Attending to their small affairs,  
With infinite complacency.  
Was it by design or by chance  
Mankind inherited this spinning fragment  
of solar driftwood  
From the dark mystery of Time and Space?

### THE END



## ABOUT THE SIRENS

The three sirens in *War of the Worlds* are part of a network of approximately 240 air raid sirens that have dotted the landscape of Los Angeles since the mid-1940s. These sirens were first installed during World War II as a system to warn the city of an incoming attack. After the war the sirens were switched off and then updated and reactivated in the 1950s during the Cold War. New technology and media platforms emerged, such as the Emergency Broadcasting System, rendering this once state-of-the-art mechanical system obsolete, and the sirens were completely decommissioned in 1985. Over 75% of the sirens remain and will be left in place until they become unsafe or a construction project requires their

removal. For *War of the Worlds*, three downtown sirens were completely refurbished – the siren “heads” were detached, and old rusted and rotting parts were removed and replaced with new Meyer Sound speakers for the performance.

Repurposing the sirens into a platform for public art was conceived by Tanner Blackman, the former planning director for Councilmember Huizar’s office, and Carmen Zella, Co-founder & Creative Director of NOW Art. The multiplicity of the sirens and their placement throughout the city inspired the idea to create a sound art network connecting artistic and cultural expression between communities. *War of the Worlds* is the first project to explore the possibilities of this new platform.

*War of the Worlds* delves into layers of the city’s history and brings them to life in an unprecedented way. The sirens are silent witnesses to a time filled with existential anxiety, but also of the birth of the city’s cultural development. World War II brought to Los Angeles both the constant fear of annihilation from beyond – and, paradoxically, a stream of European refugees who shaped the city’s cultural growth. As markers of the turning point of the city, these sirens are ideal icons to resurrect in the hopes of both commemorating the past and also meditating on the present and future life of a city undergoing such an exciting expansion and cultural metamorphosis. *War of the Worlds* repurposes these archaic symbols of fear and doom into gathering sites for cultural engagement and exchange. By bringing the concert hall out into the city’s streets, this project makes visible the potential for transforming any public place into a site for a performance experience.



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## ABOUT THE LA PHIL

The Los Angeles Philharmonic, under the vibrant leadership of Music & Artistic Director Gustavo Dudamel, presents an inspiring array of music, through a commitment to foundational works and adventurous explorations. Both at home and abroad, the Philharmonic – recognized as one of the world's outstanding orchestras – is leading the way in ground-breaking programming, both on stage and in the community, offering a diverse range of programs that reflect the orchestra's artistry and demonstrate its vision. 2017/18 marks the orchestra's 99th season.

More than 250 concerts are either performed or presented by the LA Phil at its two iconic venues: the Frank Gehry-designed Walt Disney Concert Hall and the Hollywood Bowl. During its winter season with approximately 165 performances at Walt Disney Concert Hall, the LA Phil creates festivals, artist residencies, and other thematic programs designed to enhance the symphonic music experience and delve further into certain artists' or composers' work. The organization's commitment to the music of our time is also evident throughout the season programming, as well as in the exhilarating Green Umbrella series and the LA Phil's extensive commissioning initiatives.

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## ABOUT THE INDUSTRY

The Industry creates experimental productions that expand the traditional definition of opera. By merging media and engaging in interdisciplinary collaborations, we produce works that inspire new audiences for the art form. We believe that opera can be emergent and responsive to new perspectives and voices in contemporary culture. The Industry serves as an incubator for new talent and for artists predominantly based in Los Angeles.

Founded by Yuval Sharon in 2010, The Industry has developed large-scale world premiere productions every other year: *Crescent City* (2012), *Invisible Cities* (2013), and *Hopscotch* (2015). We present smaller-scale yet artistically ambitious programs: *First Take*, a biennial workshop of six new operas-in-progress; *Second Take*, a full concert commission and workshop from a *First Take* composer; *Highway One*, a performance series dedicated to California's countercultural history; and *Lab*, a platform for experiments in collaborative processes. The Industry Records expands the reach of new American opera through high-quality recordings.

Visit [www.theindustryla.org](http://www.theindustryla.org) for more information.

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## ABOUT NOW ART

NOW Art is an arts organization based in Los Angeles that aims to increase the quality and vitality of public art as a vehicle to engage cultural, social, and civic conversations.

As a women-run organization of curators, producers and artists, NOW Art is impassioned with the vision of how transformative art can be, and is dedicated to making more works available in our public landscape. NOW Art has been a voice for the increasing needs of curating, producing and expanding Public Art, and is keen to further this interdisciplinary approach by collaborating on projects with other creative organizations.

Founded by the Creative Director Carmen Zella and Director Heidi Chang, NOW Art is an award winning public arts organization that has garnered international acclaim with projects like *Liquid Shard* at Pershing Square in partnership with civic organizations like the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks. Since 2015, Carmen Zella and Tanner Blackman, the former planning director for Councilmember Huizar's office, have developed the concept to repurpose Los Angeles's defunct air raid sirens into a platform for sound art.

Visit [www.nowartla.org](http://www.nowartla.org) for more information.

Artist and performer bios can be found at [www.waroftheworlds.la/bios](http://www.waroftheworlds.la/bios)

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## ABOUT THE *WAR OF THE WORLDS* BROADCAST

At 8pm on Sunday, October 30, 1938, unsuspecting listeners to CBS Radio tuned in to hear what sounded like an alien landing and attack on Grover's Mill, New Jersey. What they were actually hearing was a fictional dramatization of H. G. Wells novel, adapted by Howard E. Koch for Orson Welles' series *The Mercury Theatre on the Air*. The program's format was a simulated live newscast of developing events interrupting a concert of a big band playing jazz standards. "I had conceived the idea of doing a radio broadcast in such a manner that a crisis would actually seem to be happening," Welles later said, "and would be broadcast in such a dramatized form as to appear to be a real event taking place at that time, rather than a mere radio play." The nation-wide panic of audience members who believed the report led to widespread media condemnation and outrage.

In his recent study *Broadcast Hysteria*, A. Brad Schwartz sees the broadcast as a turning point in the nation's assessment of the new medium of radio. "All of a sudden," he writes, "no crisis, disaster, or tragedy seemed truly remote anymore. Broadcast news kept Americans better informed about current events than they had ever been before, but it also kept the nation permanently on edge." His book draws the connection to contemporary means of disseminating information through social media: "Technology had amplified a very human impulse, the need to spread the word, and accelerated it far beyond the speed of thought." His book concludes: "We have more information, good and bad, at our fingertips than ever before, but it is up to us to make sense of it."

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## PRODUCTION CREDITS

**Elizabeth Cline**, executive director for *The Industry*  
**Marc Lowenstein**, music director for *The Industry*  
**Ash Nichols**, production manager for *The Industry*  
**Lindsey Bruno**, associate production manager for *The Industry*  
**Carmen Zella**, co-founder & creative director for *NOW Art*  
**Heidi Chang**, co-founder & director for *NOW Art*  
**Alejandra Fernandez**, graphic design & production assistant for *NOW Art*  
**Ally Taylor**, experience designer for *NOW Art*  
**Alejandra Cisneros** and **Alexandra Meda**, assistant directors  
**Page Dovolis**, assistant costume designer  
**Kevin Hughes**, props master  
**Brady Keehn** and **Sky Madden**, siren sites set dressing  
**Whitney McAnally**, *WDCH* stage manager  
**Lindsay Lowy**, **Kimberly Mitchell** and **Alex Rehberger**, siren sites stage managers  
**Asheley Aleria**, **Ellen Den Herder** and **Matthew Lengyel**, siren sites production assistants  
**Oliver Von**, videographer / documentary lead  
**Matthew Davis**, *WDCH* Electronics Operator  
Telecommunications provided by **Bexel Global Broadcast Solutions**

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## LA PHIL CREDITS

*War of the Worlds* is made possible with generous support from Margaret Morgan and Wesley Phoa in honor of the Deborah Borda Women in the Arts Initiative.

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Lenore S. and Bernard A. Greenberg  
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Nancy S. and Barry Sanders  
Elizabeth and Justus Schlichting  
Ellen and Arnold Zetcher

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The *War of the Worlds* radio play by Howard Koch used by permission of Peter Koch

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## THE INDUSTRY CREDITS

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## NOW ART CREDITS

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# WAR OF THE WORLDS

NOV 12 2pm | NOV 18 12pm, 2pm

WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL  
— and —  
DTLA locations



LA PHIL

GUSTAVO DUDAMEL  
Music & Artistic Director