



# Jimmy López Bellido

## Aurora & Ad Astra

LETICIA MORENO · HOUSTON SYMPHONY  
ANDRÉS OROZCO-ESTRADA



# AURORA & AD ASTRA

Jimmy López Bellido (b. 1978)

**Aurora, for Solo Violin and Orchestra \***

1	I. Equatorialis	11. 31
2	II. Borealis	12. 53
3	III. Australis	12. 27

**Symphony No. 2: Ad Astra**

4	I. Voyager	8. 10
5	II. Apollo	12. 11
6	III. Hubble	6. 08
7	IV. Challenger	8. 28
8	V. Revelation	14. 23

Total playing time: 86. 21

\* Leticia Moreno, violin

Houston Symphony

Andrés Orozco-Estrada, conductor

## Note from Jimmy López Bellido

*Aurora*, for Solo Violin and Orchestra

During my years in Finland, I was privileged to witness one of Nature’s most spectacular displays: the aurora borealis (northern lights). Produced by the clash of solar flares with Earth’s atmosphere, auroras are not only a stunning visual spectacle, but also a reminder that the planet we live on is constantly interacting with its neighboring celestial bodies. The concerto, inspired by this phenomenon, takes this concept a step or two further. Each of its three movements pays homage to a different kind of aurora: *I. Equatorialis*, *II. Borealis*, and *III. Australis*. The last two are observable phenomena on Earth, whereas the first is used to describe similar magnetic anomalies on other planets. The soloist stands metaphorically as a witness to these phenomena, while the orchestra expands and amplifies its sounds and gestures.



*Equatorialis* begins in a quasi-cadenza-like manner, with the violin commanding the stage as the orchestra follows, imitates, and develops its germinal gestures. As the soloist finds its pulse, so does the orchestra, eventually reaching several climactic points that sound familiar yet foreign with their arresting rhythms and plush orchestrations. *Borealis* takes us to a place of ethereal quietude, beginning with the soloist, which is echoed by three additional violins placed strategically within the concert hall. Here, the orchestra transforms the waves of light into waves of sound, enveloping the audience and making them experience with their ears what is normally reserved for the eye. *Australis* begins menacingly in the lower regions of the orchestra, gradually growing, achieving full power, and leading to a relentless motif in the solo violin that is then echoed by different instrumental groups in the orchestra. Energy levels stay high throughout with tension constantly building up and being released only

occasionally, thus placing enormous physical demands on the soloist. *Aurora*'s three movements take the listener on a wondrous journey of light through sound. This piece has great significance to me, not only because of its subject and its connection to my beloved Finland, but also because it was my first collaboration with Conductor Andrés Orozco-Estrada as composer-in-residence of the world-class Houston Symphony. *Aurora* is dedicated to Leticia Moreno, whose energy and excitement have been an enormous source of inspiration. —Jimmy López Bellido

#### Symphony No. 2: *Ad Astra*

For millennia, the stars have awakened both a profound sense of humility and a feeling of infinite expansion when seen by human eyes. *Ad Astra* is an homage to humanity's spirit of exploration, told through iconic NASA missions that forever changed our understanding of our place in the universe. Commissioned by the

Houston Symphony under Maestro Andrés Orozco-Estrada's Music Directorship, this work is dedicated to the people of NASA, whose bravery and vision continue to inspire humanity's most ambitious dreams. *Voyager*, the first of this symphony's five movements, starts with a solo vibraphone conveying the words "Ad Astra" in Morse code. At the initiative of Carl Sagan, the Latin phrase "per aspera ad astra" ("through hardship to the stars") was embedded in the golden records onboard the *Voyager* space probes. The last two words of this phrase serve as a rhythmic motif, permeating the whole movement and gaining increasing significance as the symphony unfolds. The second movement tells the story of the Apollo program. From its inception to the tragic loss of life of Apollo 1, the awe-inspiring television broadcast of Apollo 8 (in which the crew read verses from Genesis), and the historic first moonwalk of Apollo 11, this movement walks us through one of humanity's greatest adventures. The verrophone (from

the glass harmonica family) with its eerie overtones plays a central role, evoking the moon's barren yet inviting landscape. The opening of the third movement represents the bumpy beginnings of the Hubble Space Telescope through jolting phrases and the sound of a wind machine. After an ingenious repair mission, this incredibly complex and sophisticated piece of machinery goes on to make remarkable discoveries, including numerous stars, nebulae, galaxies, exoplanets, and the age of our universe. The emotional core of the piece lies within its fourth movement, *Challenger*. The Space Shuttle Challenger carried nine successful missions before that fateful morning when seven crewmembers lost their lives shortly after liftoff. The music attempts to capture what people were thinking and feeling in their hearts that day—the months leading up to the tragedy were filled with anticipation, so I have tried to convey that up to the very end. In the fifth movement, *Revelation*, we are now in the future; the *Voyager* space



probes are now nothing more than time capsules. When all hope is thought to be lost, our radio telescopes detect a signal: one of the probes is found by intelligent beings (represented by offstage trumpets) who decode our “per aspera ad astra” message, prompting a dialogue with a civilization other than our own for the first time. The message we exchange is one of the 55 audio-recorded greetings contained within the golden record: “Salvete quicumque estis; bonam erga vos voluntatem habemus, et pacem per astra ferimus” (“Greetings to you, whoever you are; we have good will towards you and bring peace across space”). Countless civilizations appear before our eyes as a new era begins.



Jimmy López Bellido & Houston Symphony  
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## Biographies

### Jimmy López Bellido

An “undeniably exciting composer” (*Opera News*), with “a brilliant command of orchestral timbres and textures” (*Dallas Morning News*) and “a virtuoso mastery of the modern orchestra” (*The New Yorker*), López has created works performed by leading orchestras around the world and in prestigious venues such as Carnegie Hall, Sydney Opera House, Gewandhaus Leipzig, Kennedy Center, Vienna’s Musikverein, Konzerthaus Berlin, Nordic Music Days, the Singapore 2010 Youth Olympic Games, the Lima 2019 Pan American Games, and the Aspen, Tanglewood, and Grant Park music festivals. “Fiesta!”, one of his most famous works, has received over a hundred performances worldwide making it one of the most performed contemporary orchestral works. “Bel Canto”, a full-length opera commissioned by Lyric Opera of Chicago as part of the Renée Fleming

initiative and based on Ann Patchett’s bestselling novel, premiered in December 2015 to wide critical acclaim and was broadcast U.S. nationwide on PBS’ Great Performances. “Dreamers”, an oratorio which he wrote in collaboration with Pulitzer Prize-winning Playwright Nilo Cruz, was premiered by Ana María Martínez, Esa-Pekka Salonen, and the Philharmonia Orchestra in 2019. That year also saw the release of “Symphonic Canvas”, his most recent album with Miguel Harth-Bedoya and the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, on MSR Classics. Mr. López completed his three-year tenure as the Houston Symphony’s Composer-in-Residence in the spring of 2020. A native of Lima, he studied at the city’s National Conservatory of Music prior to graduating from the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki with a Master of Music degree. López completed his Ph.D. in Music at the University of California-Berkeley. He is published by Birdsong Music and Filarmonika Music Publishing.

### Leticia Moreno

Recognised as a truly exciting and versatile violinist, Leticia Moreno “captivates audiences and critics alike with her natural charisma, virtuosity and deep interpretative force”. She has appeared with the most renowned conductors such as Zubin Mehta, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Paavo Järvi, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Christoph Eschenbach, Yuri Temirkanov, Krzysztof Penderecki, Andrés Orozco-Estrada, Josep Pons, Juanjo Mena, Gustavo Gimeno, Peter Eotvos, and Andrey Boreyko amongst others. She has also performed with leading orchestras such as Wiener Symphoniker, St Petersburg Philharmonic, Philharmonia Orchestra, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Washington’s National Symphony, and The Mariinsky orchestras, Orchestra del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte Carlo, Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg, Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, Orquesta Sinfónica Simón Bolívar, and is a regular guest with most of the major Spanish orchestras.

Leticia recently premiered Jimmy Lopez’ new violin concerto “Aurora”, with Houston Symphony Orchestra and Andres Orozco Estrada to critical acclaim. Last season she had her debut with the Helsinki Philharmonic and Peter Eötvös as well as with NHK Symphony Orchestra in Tokyo with Paavo Järvi. Other recent debuts include NCPA Orchestra in Beijing conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy, as well as Philharmonia Orchestra with Paavo Järvi.

Leticia’s 2020/2021 season saw her debut with the Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo and Josep Pons, with the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra Leticia as part of the Cesky Krumlov Festival, the Janacek Philharmonic, as well as with the Royal Northern Sinfonia and Antonio Méndez. Leticia will also return to the Orquesta de Valencia and Orquesta Filarmonica de Malaga.

As a keen recitalist and chamber musician, Leticia has collaborated alongside Sol

Gabetta, Bertrand Chamayou, Kirill Gerstein, Alexander Ghindin, Lauma Skride, Mario Brunello, Leonard Elschenbroich, Ksenija Sidorova and Maxim Rysanov.

Leticia released her latest album *Piazzolla* on Deutsche Grammophon, recorded at Abbey Road Studios, London and Emil Berliner Studio, Berlin with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Andrés Orozco-Estrada. Leticia has also recently recorded two CDs for Universal/Deutsche Grammophon: *Spanish Landscapes - a study of Spanish Music* (Sarasate, Lorca, Granados, Falla etc) and *Shostakovich Violin Concerto No.1* with St Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Yuri Temirkanov.

Leticia studied with Zakhar Bron, Maxim Vengerov and Mstislav Rostropovich at Escuela Superior de Música Reina Sofía in Madrid, the Hochschule für Musik und Tanz in Cologne and Guildhall School in London, and was the youngest member of the prestigious Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung.

Leticia Moreno has won international violin competitions such as Szeryng, Concertino Praga, Novosibirsk, Sarasate, Kreisler, as well as the being awarded with the Echo Rising Star.

Born in Spain of Peruvian descent, Leticia Moreno has developed strong ties with Latin America, especially with her country of origin where she returns every season to perform and which has as a corollary her recent World Premier of Jimmy Lopez's new violin concerto in Houston and Lima.

Leticia plays a 1762 Nicola Gagliano.



Leticia Moreno  
© Omar Ayyashi



## Houston Symphony

During the 2021–22 Season, the Houston Symphony celebrates its final season under Andrés Orozco-Estrada as Music Director and continues its second century as one of America’s leading orchestras with a full complement of concert, community, education, touring, and recording activities. One of the oldest performing arts organizations in Texas, the Symphony held its inaugural performance at The Majestic Theater in downtown Houston on June 21, 1913. Today, with an operating budget of \$28.8 million (FY22), the full-time ensemble of professional musicians presents nearly 170 (FY19) concerts annually, making it the largest performing arts organization in Houston. Additionally, musicians of the orchestra and the Symphony’s two Community-Embedded Musicians offer over 1,000 (FY19) community-based performances each year at various schools, community centers, hospitals, and churches reaching more than 200,000 (FY19) people

in Greater Houston annually, prior to COVID-19.

After suspending concert activities in March 2020 and cancelling the remainder of 2019–20 events due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Symphony resumed activities in May 2020, opening the 2020–21 Season on schedule in September 2020 with small audiences of 150, which the Symphony gradually increased to 450 audience members per performance. Due to the financial impact of the canceled 2019–20 Season events, plus the reduction of sales capacity due to audience social distancing in 2020–21, the Symphony cut expenses, reducing planned spending from \$36.2 million in 2019–20 to \$22.7 million in 2020–21. The Houston Symphony’s Education and Community Engagement team continued to fulfill its mission through creative and virtual means throughout this period. The Symphony successfully completed a full season with in-person audiences and weekly livestreams of each

performance, making it one of the only orchestras in the world to do so.

The Grammy Award-winning Houston Symphony has recorded under various prestigious labels, including Koch International Classics, Naxos, RCA Red Seal, Telarc, Virgin Classics, and, most recently, Dutch recording label PENTATONE. In 2017, the Houston Symphony was awarded an ECHO Klassik award for the live recording of Alban Berg’s *Wozzeck* under the direction of former Music Director Hans Graf. The orchestra earned its first Grammy nomination and Grammy Award at the 60th annual ceremony for the same recording in the Best Opera Recording category.

## Andrés Orozco-Estrada

Energy, elegance, and spirit—that is what particularly distinguishes Andrés Orozco-Estrada as a musician. Since the 2020–21 season, he has brought these strengths to bear as principal conductor of the Vienna Symphony Orchestra. In addition, he has been Music Director of the Houston Symphony since the 2014–15 season, and after eight outstanding years, the 2021–22 season will be his last as Music Director.

Orozco-Estrada was principal conductor of the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra from September 2014 to July 2021 and said goodbye in June 21 with a major concert at the Alte Oper, about which the Frankfurter Rundschau wrote: *“The image of a balance of human impeccability, communicative passion, and the highest professionalism emerged. An orchestra, it was understood, wants to enjoy its work and at the same time make serious musical progress, and of course that sounds easier than it is. But it is precisely*



*the combination of dancelike playfulness and an unconditional search for perfection that obviously distinguishes the Colombian's work."*

Orozco-Estrada regularly conducts Europe's leading orchestras, including the Vienna Philharmonic, the Berlin Philharmonic, the Sächsische Staatskapelle Dresden, the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, the Koninklijk Concertgebouworkest, the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, and the Orchestre National de France, as well as major U.S. orchestras such as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Philadelphia Orchestra. He has also conducted concerts and opera performances at the Berlin State Opera and the Salzburg Festival with outstanding success.

In the 2021–22 season, he tours with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra for the first time in Austria (Graz, Salzburg, Bregenz), Europe (Spain, France, Germany), and Asia (Taiwan, China, Korea). Additionally, he

conducts a new production with his orchestra at the Theater an der Wien (Catalani, *La Wally*) and takes the podium at the open-air concert in the Museumsquartier.

Orozco-Estrada also appears with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Staatskapelle Berlin, and the Staatsoper Unter den Linden, where he will conduct the New Year's Concert 2021–22 and a revival of *Tosca*, as well as with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France and the Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della Rai.

Also this season, a tour with the Filarmonica della Scala will take him to Bucharest, the Grafenegg Festival, and to the Dvořák Prague International Music Festival, where the orchestra will open the festival under his direction, accompanied by a TV broadcast.

Orozco-Estrada is particularly committed to new concert and mediation formats, as well as premieres of young composers.



Andrés Orozco-Estrada  
© Martin Sigmund

The inaugural concert with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra featured the world premiere of a commissioned composition by Dutch composer Carlijn Metselaar. Another world premiere of a work by the Austrian composer Johannes Maria Staud follows in 2022.

The WSY Talent also celebrated its premiere, in which exceptional musical talents were allowed to work on a solo piece with orchestral accompaniment and then present it in concert. There will be another WSY Talent in June 2022.

Working with young musicians is very close to his heart, and in 2019 he went on tour in Europe with the Filarmónica Joven de Colombia, of which he has been principal conductor since 2021. Since November 2018, Orozco-Estrada has also been principal conductor of the Freixenet Symphony Orchestra of the Reina Sofía School of Music in Madrid, Spain. He will tour Europe with both orchestras in the 2021–22 season.

His releases on PENTATONE have received much attention: with the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, he made recordings of Stravinsky's *Firebird* and *Rite of Spring*, which were praised by critics as "hauntingly beautiful" (Gramophone). His concert recording of Richard Strauss's opera *Salome* has also enjoyed great success. With the Houston Symphony, he released a "zestful" Dvořák cycle "with warm colours" (Pizzicato). He has also recorded all Brahms and Mendelssohn symphonies.

Born in Medellín (Colombia), Andrés Orozco-Estrada began his musical education by playing the violin, receiving his first conducting lessons at the age of 15. In 1997 he moved to Vienna, where he was accepted into the conducting class of Uroš Lajovic, a student of the legendary Hans Swarowsky, at the renowned Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst. Orozco-Estrada lives in Vienna.

## Orchestra members

### First Violin

Yoonshin Song, *Concertmaster* \*  
Alexander Velinzon, *Guest Concertmaster* +  
Eric Halen, *Co-Concertmaster*  
Qi Ming, *Assistant Concertmaster* +  
Marina Brubaker  
Tong Yan +^  
MiHee Chung  
Sophia Silivos  
Rodica Gonzalez  
Ferenc Illenyi +  
Si-Yang Lao  
Kurt Johnson  
Christopher Neal  
Sergei Galperin  
Boson Mo \*  
Jenna Barghouti \*  
Adam Wu +

### Second Violin

MuChen Hsieh, *Principal*  
Hitai Lee

Mihaela Frusina  
Annie Chen \*  
Jing Zheng  
Martha Chapman  
Tianjie Lu  
Anastasia Ehrlich +^  
Tina Zhang  
Jordan Koransky ^  
Boson Mo +  
Amy Semes  
Lindsey Baggett  
Katrina Savitski +  
Michaela Wellems \*

### Viola

Wayne Brooks, *Principal*  
Joan DerHovsepian, *Associate Principal*  
Wei Jiang  
Linda Goldstein  
Sheldon Person  
Fay Shapiro  
Daniel Strba  
Jarita Ng  
Phyllis Herdlika

Suzanne LeFevre +  
Lizzy Golofeev \*

### Cello

Brinton Averil Smith, *Principal*  
Christopher French, *Associate Principal*  
Anthony Kitai  
Louis-Marie Fardet  
Jeffrey Butler  
Maki Kubota  
Xiao Wong  
Charles Seo  
Annamarie Reader +  
Emileigh Vandiver \*

### Double Bass

Robin Kesselman, *Principal*  
Timothy Dilenschneider, *Associate Principal*  
Mark Shapiro  
Eric Larson  
Andrew Pedersen  
Burke Shaw  
Donald Howey

Michael McMurray

### Flute

Aralee Dorough, *Principal*

Judy Dines +

Kathryn Ladner

### Piccolo

Kathryn Ladner

Judy Dines +

### Oboe

Jonathan Fischer, *Principal* \*

Anne Leek, *Associate*

*Principal*+

Colin Gatwood

Adam Dinitz +

### English Horn

Adam Dinitz +

### Clarinet

Mark Nuccio, *Principal* \*

Christian Schubert

Alexander Potiomkin +

John Diodati +

### E-flat Clarinet

John Diodati +

### Bass Clarinet

Alexander Potiomkin +

### Bassoon

Rian Craypo, *Principal* \*

Isaac Schultz, *Associate*

*Principal* +

Elise Wagner

Adam Trussell +

### Contrabassoon

Adam Trussell +

### Horn

William VerMeulen, *Principal* +

Robert Johnson, *Associate*

*Principal* \*

Jesse Clevenger, *Assistant*

*Principal*

Brian Thomas

Nancy Goodearl

Ian Mayton

### Trumpet

Mark Hughes, *Principal*

John Parker, *Associate*

*Principal* +x

Robert Walp, *Assistant*

*Principal* +

Richard Harris

Logan Kavanaugh +x

Colin Sieg +x

Noah Adams +x

### Trombone

Allen Barnhill, *Principal*

Bradley White, *Associate*

*Principal*

Phillip Freeman

### Tuba

Dave Kirk, *Principal*

### Timpani

Leonardo Soto, *Principal*

### Percussion

Brian Del Signore, *Principal*

Mark Griffith

Matthew Strauss

### Harp

Megan Conley, *Principal* \*

Laurie Meister+

### Celesta

Scott Holshouser, *Principal* +

### Verrophone

Friedrich Kern +

### Key:

\* = Aurora

^ = Echo Violins (Aurora)

+ = Ad Astra

x = Offstage Trumpets (Ad Astra)

Musicians with no symbols are featured on all pieces





Performing Ad Astra  
© Franciel Braga





Rehearsing *Aurora*  
© Franciel Braga

## Acknowledgements

### PRODUCTION TEAM

Producer, engineer, editing & mixing **Brad Sayles**

Assistant engineers **Shannon Smith** (for *Aurora*) & **Ryan Edwards** (for *Ad Astra*)

Mastering engineer **Ryan Edwards**

Liner notes **Jimmy López Bellido** | Cover photography © **Igor Studio**

Cover design **Suus Hessling** | Product management & design **Kasper van Kooten**

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### PENTATONE TEAM

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Sit back and enjoy