

Interplanetary Etudes: The Rover Suite

for solo French horn and piano



MARI ALICE CONRAD

Interplanetary Etudes: The Rover Suite

- i. Curiosity
- ii. Perseverance
- iii. Spirit
- iv. Opportunity

for solo French horn and piano accompaniment

by Mari Alice Conrad

2025

Movement ii. Perseverance:

Commissioned by the Contemporary Showcase Edmonton Society, 2025

This copy includes movement *ii. Perseverance*

ii. Perseverance | Specifications:

Performance Level:	Elementary (approximately RCM Gr. 1-3)
Duration:	approximately 3:30 mins
Technical Objectives:	long tones; lip slurs; sustained dynamic responsiveness and control over time; enduring expressiveness and projection; resonance playing or sympathetic resonance technique of playing into the piano; standing with instrument.

Composer Contact:

Mari Alice Conrad

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Program Notes:

Interplanetary Etudes: The Rover Suite is a collection of four short pieces for solo French horn and piano accompaniment. This four-movement suite takes young horn players on a musical journey across the dusty red plains of Mars, guided by four legendary rovers that have explored its mysterious surface: **Curiosity, Perseverance*, Spirit, and Opportunity.**



Each movement captures the unique personality and mission of these mechanical pioneers. With the warm and ethereal voice of the French horn and the shimmering resonance of the piano, the suite invites performers and listeners alike to imagine what it might feel like to roll across an alien landscape millions of miles from Earth.

Mars is a place of silence and extremes — vast, windswept deserts, towering volcanoes, and skies tinted pink by dust. Yet it is also a place full of questions and possibility. The idea is both ethereal and heroic — a blend of loneliness, curiosity, and enduring hope. Through music, we can explore those feelings just as the rovers explore the terrain.

Whether you're playing or listening, *Interplanetary Etudes: The Rover Suite* is an invitation to dream — to look up at the night sky and wonder what's out there, and how music can bring that distant world just a little bit closer.

***ii. Perseverance**

The second movement is about strength, stamina, and resolve. The horn plays with a noble tone freely moving around the planet while the piano supports it like the steady wheels of a rover rolling toward the horizon. There's a sense of something bigger — not just discovery, but the enduring spirit of exploration. Echoes between horn and piano suggest the communication between Earth and space.

Performance Notes:

French Horn:

- ⦿ Please stand for the performance of movement *ii. Perseverance* to facilitate small movement towards the inside of the piano as indicated.
- ⦿ Overall, the player should aim for a pure and even tone throughout.
- ⦿ For the boxed sections of the score, the performer should direct the bell of the horn toward the interior of the piano to facilitate sympathetic resonance.¹ If additional height is necessary to achieve proper alignment, a stable platform—such as a conductor's podium or a wide, heavy-duty wooden step stool—should be placed in position prior to the performance. The platform must be sufficiently wide and sturdy to ensure performer safety and ease of movement.
- ⦿ To minimize disruption during the transition, performers are encouraged to memorize the boxed sections so that the music stand does not need to be repositioned.
- ⦿ Listen to the echo and decay of the horn resonance inside the piano as long as desired (mm 17 & 51).



Piano:

- ⦿ The piano score is written on three staves to clearly distinguish the multiple melodic and textural layers within the accompaniment. The top staff is intended for the right hand, and the bottom staff for the left hand. The middle staff may be played by either hand, as dictated by the musical context and performer preference. This layout enhances clarity and facilitates the accurate realization of the layered accompaniment.
- ⦿ Pedal may be applied at the discretion of the pianist to enhance musical expression and support harmonic continuity, except where specific pedal markings are indicated in the score. In those instances, the notated pedaling should be followed precisely.
- ⦿ Please perform on a grand piano with the lid fully raised (on the long stick) to allow for maximum resonance and projection.
- ⦿ Listen to the echo and decay of the horn resonance inside the piano as long as desired (mm 17 & 51).

¹ **How does sympathetic vibrations/resonance work?*

When the pianist holds down the keys of specific notes and the pedal, and the horn plays into the piano, the horn's sound causes those piano strings to vibrate sympathetically — creating an ethereal, sustained, echo-like effect.

Interplanetary Etudes: The Rover Suite

ii. Perseverance

♩ = 60 Expansive; with resolve and discovery

Mari Alice Conrad

Horn in F

PIANO

mp

con pedale

5

French horn: aim for a pure and even tone throughout.

p *mp* *p* *p* *mf* *p*

mp *mf* *mp*

13

Turn bell towards the inside of piano

mf *listen...*

mf *mp* *pp* *listen...*

*Execute a controlled, gradual pedal release.

18 *l'istesso tempo*

Musical score for measures 18-23. The top staff features a melodic line with dynamics *p*, *f*, and *p*. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand, with dynamics *mp* and *f*. A triplet of eighth notes appears in the right hand of measure 23.

26

Musical score for measures 24-28. The top staff has a melodic line with dynamics *p* and *mp*. The piano accompaniment includes chords in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand, with dynamics *p*, *mp*, and *mp*. A triplet of eighth notes is present in the right hand of measure 26. The instruction "gently flowing: but not rushing" is written above the piano part.

Musical score for measures 29-33. The top staff features a melodic line with dynamics *p*, *p*, *mp*, *mp*, *p*, and *mp*. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand, with dynamics *mp* and *mp*. Triplet markings are present in the right hand of measures 29, 31, and 33.

34

38

triumphantly

mf mp f mp ff

34

mf

3

f

42

40

f p mf

espressivo

40

p mf

3

45

Turn bell towards the inside of piano

p

f

listen...

45

mp

f

mf

listen...

pp

8va

*

*Execute a controlled, gradual pedal release.

Interplanetary Etudes: The Rover Suite

ii. Perseverance

French Horn in F

♩ = 60 Expansive; with resolve and discovery

5 French horn: aim for a pure and even tone throughout.

p *mp* *p*

7

p *mf* *p*

13 Turn bell towards the inside of piano

mf listen...

18 *l'istesso tempo*

p *f* *p*

26

p *mp* *p* *p*

31

mp *mp* *p* *mp* *mf* *mp*

38 **42**

f *mp* *ff* *f* *p* *mf*

45 Turn bell towards the inside of piano

p *f* listen...

Composer Information:

Mari Alice Conrad is an award-winning, emerging composer in Alberta, Canada completing her doctorate in composition at the University of Alberta. She specializes in concert works for soloists, chamber ensembles, choirs, and large ensembles. Funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Mari Alice travelled to the Canadian High Arctic and Greenland (2022) in the creation of a large-scale, interactive composition project for youth exploring the effects of climate change. Her current doctoral SSHRC research-creation project examines the perception and expression of place, personal history, and the intersection of sound and geography by exploring objects, light, staging, movement, and space alongside acoustic instruments to create innovative musical contexts.



Photo: Rita Taylor, Banff Centre 2023

Recently, her works have been performed by Vancouver Chamber Choir (BC), the Canadian Chamber Choir, Standing Wave (BC), the BBC Singers (UK), the Okanagan Symphony (BC), XImE (Alberta), University of Alberta Symphony Orchestra, Ensemble ArtChoral (Québec), Pro Coro Canada (AB), Luminous Voices (AB), Exultate Chamber Singers (Toronto), The University of Alberta Madrigal Singers, Allegra Chamber Orchestra (Vancouver), SHHH!! Ensemble (Ottawa), and Edmonton Winds (Alberta & Czech Republic). She has co-designed and presented a community workshop, "Sound Sculpting" that explores the creation of contemporary music and sound art through the creation of non-traditional notation realized through electroacoustic percussion instruments and harp.

Mari Alice's compositional practice shines an exceptional light on the human condition, finding meaning in the mundane by fostering curiosity, authenticity, connection, and collaboration. Her choral music is published by Hinshaw Music (USA), *musica printima* (Canada), and Cypress Choral Music (Canada) with upcoming commissions with UltraViolet (AB), The University of Alberta Symphonic Wind Ensemble, and recording projects with the MacEwan University Generations Big Band, violinist Erin James, Edmonton Winds Ensemble, Exultate Chamber Singers, Ensemble ArtChoral, and the SHHH!! Ensemble.