

PRORAMME NOTE

Two or three years ago the bassoonist Antal Mojzer asked me if I had any suggestions for a name for the wind quintet which he and his colleagues – the wind soloists of the Lapland Chamber Orchestra – might use when they perform separately from the rest of the orchestra. I suggested *Auriga*, the beautiful constellation prominent in the northern sky in the winter which forms a fairly regular pentagon. The music I have written for them here is a kind of a guide to this constellation – starting with *Capella*, the brightest star in the group, and finishing with *Almaaz*, the largest and most mysterious. You are welcome to join us in a journey into the stars and into your own imaginations.

Although it appears as one star from the earth, *Capella (Alpha Aurigae)* is in fact two stars rotating closely around each other – their golden light separating and converging periodically (just like the harmonies in my music). Together they shine 160 times more strongly than our sun.

At a similar distance from us, but much less intense in light and heat, is *Menkarlina*, the second brightest star in Auriga. Like *Capella* this is in fact two stars of a roughly equal size, rotating around each other in a celestial dance.

Al Nath is now classified as *Gamma Tauri*, but rightfully belongs to the *Auriga* constellation, where it appears opposite to *Capella*. Two facts became the starting point for my music here: the scientific one is that the star is towards the galactic anti-centre, in a very lonely part of our galaxy; the mythological one is that in Hindu tradition *Al Nath* is *Agni*, the God of Fire.

A surprise in the instrumentation awaits the listener in *Hassaleh (iota Aurigae)*. Its name produces an interesting musical cipher using German and French note names



The piece starts with the theme in diminished form, but this grows in size throughout the piece.

Almaaz is more than 100 times further away than *Capella*, and shines 200,000 more strongly than our sun. It is inconceivably huge, and it is an inconceivably vast distance away. Every few decades it is eclipsed by another nearby object which cuts off all light from it. What is this mysterious, equally vast, accompanying object? No one yet knows.