

Solaris for Violin and Orchestra

I've always had a bit of an infatuation with the cosmos. Over the last few years, I've composed pieces which take various elements of the heavens as inspiration (including my first symphony, *Celestial Symphony*, which the IPO premiered in November of 2022). ***Solaris***, which in Latin means "of the sun," was composed for my friend Stella Chen, whose name in Latin means "star." Rather than a full-length concerto, I wanted to write a piece that highlights her dynamic and versatile abilities as a violinist, as well as her intelligence and bubbly personality.

The piece opens with a mysterious introduction featuring the solo violin accompanied by crystalline orchestral effects in the celesta and percussion that introduce many of the motivic and thematic material in the piece. The music then segues into a violin cadenza, which builds in tension and momentum to reach the piece's first climax — marked "Bright!" — which to me represents looking directly into the sun. Jazz-like chords in the brass support rapid scalar passages in the solo violin, which launch into the faster section of the work: a juxtaposition of soaring lyrical lines and violin virtuosity. This section dies away into a reprise of the opening, this time cast primarily in the orchestra. After this orchestral interlude, the violin reappears, leading to a grand climax and a dazzlingly fast coda.

I'd like to thank Stilian Kirov, Christina Salerno, and all of the individual members of the Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra for being such wonderful creative partners during my time as composer-in-residence. And of course, a huge thank you to Stella Chen for believing in my work and whose artistry and infectious personality has inspired this music on every level.

- *Jonathan Cziner*