

Eyes to the Sky

Song of the morning sky with four planets

By **Judy Isacoff**

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On a singing clear morning, a gem of light is to be found in the soft blue blanket that is Earth's atmosphere. It is planet Jupiter, visible rather high in the west until quarter to 7, when it is overwhelmed by daylight. Best to locate the namesake of the king of the gods earlier, so that you may enjoy the challenge of finding it in daylight, just before sunrise. The sun rises at about 7 in the coming days.

Find Sirius the Dog Star, the brightest true star visible in the Northern Hemisphere, close to the horizon below and left, south, of Jupiter at about 6:20. The second brightest star in our skies, red-orange Arcturus, is opposite Jupiter, quite high in the east and visible into twilight.

Planet Mars, not so bright, is best seen by 6:20, a tawny radiance mid-sky in the south, at the top of a diagonal line of dignitaries. Bright star Spica shines below and to the left of

Mars and, tomorrow morning, a wisp of a crescent moon is inline between Spica and planet Saturn, which is low to the southeast horizon.

Below Saturn, at the end of the diagonal span, shines Mercury, brightest of all.

Saturn recently began to climb into the morning sky, whereas Mercury is nearing the end of its morning apparition. The messenger of the gods persists even as the horizon brightens to a pale peach with the sun's approach.

Below and to the left of Mercury, on Sunday, search for Comet ISON, the visitor from the outer edge of our solar system that has brought sky gazers back to the morning sky. A filament of a crescent moon will be above Mercury. An unobstructed view to the east-southeast horizon is as essential as a clear sky. Have binoculars handy, especially when scanning low to the horizon.

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