



"Didcot's new symphony orchestra"

Principal sponsor:  HENLEY
AUDIO

Conductor: Geoff Bushell
Leader: Kate Bailey
Honorary President: Ed Vaizey, MP

Third Concert – Sunday 3 March 2019

PROGRAMME

Glinka	Ruslan and Ludmilla: Overture
Glazunov	Poème Lyrique, op 12
Mussorgsky	Night on the Bare Mountain
Tchaikovsky	Symphony no 5 in E minor

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A message from our Honorary President

"I am delighted that the Didcot Concert Orchestra has been established. Didcot is a vibrant and growing town, and the arts have always been a central part of its life. The concert orchestra fills a gap, and it is very much needed. Music brings great joy to people, and it also plays an important role in our schools and our communities. I wish the Didcot Concert Orchestra every success."

The Right Honourable Edward Vaizey, MP

PROGRAMME

Ruslan and Ludmilla: Overture

Mikhail Glinka (1804-57)

Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka was the first Russian composer to gain wide recognition within his own country, and is often regarded as the founding father of Russian classical music. As a small child, Mikhail was reared by his over-protective paternal grandmother, who fed him sweets, wrapped him in furs, and confined him to her room, which was always to be kept at 25°C. Unsurprisingly, he developed a sickly disposition, later in his life retaining the services of numerous physicians. The only music he heard in his youthful confinement was the sounds of the village church bells and the folk songs of passing peasant choirs. The church bells were tuned to a dissonant chord and so his ears became used to strident harmony. At the age of 13, Glinka went to the capital, Saint Petersburg, to study at a school for children of the nobility. Here he studied Latin, English, Persian, mathematics and zoology, to add to his existing knowledge of French, German and geography. After travelling in Europe, and meeting great composers in Italy, he decided that his life's mission would be to return to Russia, write in a Russian manner, and do for Russian music what Donizetti and Bellini had done for Italian music. Although he composed a dozen orchestral works, he is best remembered for his second opera *Ruslan and Ludmilla*, and from this his most permanent legacy to the concert hall is its overture.

Ruslan and Ludmilla is a poem by Alexander Pushkin, published in 1820. It is written as an epic fairy tale telling the story of the abduction of Ludmilla, the daughter of Prince Vladimir of Kiev, by the evil wizard Chernomor and the attempt by the brave knight Ruslan to find and rescue her. Glinka's opera in five acts was composed between 1837 and 1842. The effervescent overture alternates a frequently occurring martial rhythm in the wind with scurrying passages in the strings, depicting Ruslan and his search, while a lyrical theme – initially heard on violas and cellos – represents Ludmilla.

Poème Lyrique, op 12

Alexander Glazunov (1865-1936)

The Russian composer Alexander Glazunov was also a music teacher and conductor. He directed the St Petersburg Conservatory between 1905 and 1928 and was instrumental in its reorganisation following the Bolshevik Revolution. His leadership continued until 1930, though he had left the Soviet Union in 1928, never to return, settling in Paris in 1932. The best-known student under his tenure during the early Soviet years was Shostakovich. Glazunov's music was a bridge between different Russian styles, in that he was the direct successor to Balakirev's nationalism, while tending more towards Borodin's epic grandeur, Rimsky-Korsakov's orchestral virtuosity, Tchaikovsky's lyricism and Taneyev's contrapuntal skill.

Glazunov began composing at age 11, and was influenced and supported by all these composers, and mentored by Belyayev (a wealthy Russian timber merchant, music publisher and philanthropist) who put on concerts of Glazunov's music. As well as eight symphonies, Glazunov wrote a number of symphonic poems, one of the earliest being *Poème Lyrique*, composed between 1884 and 1887. The piece is in the form of a slow waltz and shows off Glazunov's gifts of memorable melody, harmony and orchestration, while epitomising Russian romanticism.

Night on the Bare Mountain

Modest Mussorgsky (1839-81)

In his youth, Mussorgsky composed a musical picture called *St. John's Eve on Bald Mountain* on the theme of a witches' sabbath occurring on St John's Eve – 23 June – a Russian celebration of the summer solstice. The original 1867 orchestral version of this work (composed in 12 days) appeared variously as *The Witches* or *St John's Eve on the Bare Mountain*. However Mussorgsky's teacher Balakirev thought he could do better, and the composer rewrote it several times. Various revisions, including the addition of choral parts, were attempted but faltered before completion. The third version – the one we know today – was made by Rimsky-Korsakov, and premiered in St Petersburg in 1886, five years after Mussorgsky's death. In 1940, conductor Leopold Stokowski arranged the piece for the Walt Disney animated film *Fantasia*.

Mussorgsky's descriptive preface to the score reads: "*Subterranean sounds of non-human voices. Appearance of the spirits of darkness, followed by that of the black god Chernobog. Glorification of Chernobog and Black Service. Sabbath and the dancing of witches. At the height of the sabbath, the distant ringing of a village church bell is heard; it disperses the spirits of darkness. And finally peace returns at the end [clarinet and flute solos] as morning breaks*".

Interval – 20 minutes – refreshments outside and downstairs

Symphony no 5 in E minor

Peter Tchaikovsky (1840-93)

- I – Andante – Allegro con anima
- II – Andante cantabile con alcuna licenza
- III – Valse – Allegro moderato
- IV – Andante maestoso – Allegro vivace

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky was born in Votkinsk on 7 May 1840, the son of a government inspector of mines. By the age of four, it was evident that the young Tchaikovsky had considerable musical talent and he was given lessons. When the family moved to St Petersburg in 1848, his studies continued along more conventional lines as his father wanted him to make a career in public service. Thus he found himself a civil servant to the Russian Ministry of Justice, but at the age of 23 gave up his position to devote himself (in poverty) to music. He enrolled at the newly-founded St Petersburg Conservatory where he received lessons in orchestration from Anton Rubinstein. Three years later, Rubinstein's brother Nicolas invited him to Moscow to take up a professorship at the recently opened Conservatoire there. This brought him into contact with Balakirev, leader of the nationalist group of composers including Rimsky-Korsakov. In 1876 he struck up a correspondence with Madame Nadia von Meck, who he was never to meet, but her patronage freed him from financial worries.

The fifth symphony – started ten years after completion of the fourth – was composed in idyllic surroundings at a country house near Klin (northwest of Moscow) in 1888. Notes found at Klin after the composer's death leave no doubt about the tragic nature of the programme in Tchaikovsky's mind, which in his own words he describes as *"a complete resignation before fate, which is the same as the inscrutable predestination of Providence"*.

The first movement's chorale-like clarinet "motto theme" over lower strings (which appears funereal here but is to return later in a more dramatic form) is followed by the gentle tread of a clarinet and bassoon theme. The second movement starts with soft chords in the lower strings, which soon support one of the most beautiful horn solos in the repertoire. The third movement is an elegant major-key waltz, as if some respite is needed from the darker movements before it. The motto theme is transformed in the major key to launch the finale, which generally espouses the idea of "ultimate victory through strife", and after recalling many of the themes from previous movements, returns for its conclusion to the motto theme, now triumphant. Pervading the whole work is an ebb-and-flow of emotion which cannot fail to stir the soul of player and audience alike. The fifth symphony has thus become one of Tchaikovsky's most popular and enduring works.

Programme notes by Geoff Bushell

CONDUCTOR

Geoff Bushell studied conducting with George Hurst, Michael Rose, Denise Ham and Adrian Leaper. As conductor and musical director of Oxford-based St Giles Orchestra since 1983, Geoff has developed its technical and musical capabilities and led it through many new opportunities such as partnerships with local choirs for the performance of Orff's *Carmina Burana* and Verdi's *Requiem* in Oxford Town Hall, and recordings including Walton's *Crown Imperial March* which was broadcast on the BBC One Show. On 27 April 2019, Geoff makes his conducting debut at Oxford's Sheldonian Theatre in Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* with a 70-strong St Giles Orchestra, 150 singers from Wantage Choral Society and South Chiltern Society, and three young professional soloists. Geoff also regularly rehearses Abingdon Symphony Orchestra and Phoenix Flutes. Renowned for introducing players and audiences alike to lesser-known and unjustly neglected romantic repertoire, he has also earned a reputation as a composer of romantic-style pieces, including four commissions from the Abingdon and District Musical Society to celebrate their successive tenth anniversaries. Geoff is also well known locally as a player of French horn and double bass.

OXUS

Kate Bailey	Leader
Louise Graham	Violin
Heather Birt	Viola
Spike Wilson	Cello

DCO's four string section leaders are the members of OXUS – an innovative and vibrant string quartet, formed in 2006. They perform music from all eras, but specialise in contemporary repertoire and give regular recitals and workshops in schools and colleges. They frequently work with other performers and media, performing works including Steve Reich's *Different Trains* with electronics; an original composition by and with jazz guitarist Pete Oxley; and, with actor-singer Nicholas Cass-Beggs, *The Juliet Letters* by Elvis Costello and The Brodsky Quartet. Performances include appearances at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London, the Oxford Contemporary Music Marathon, and the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, and they have also enjoyed the challenge of working with artist Pam Foley, composing and improvising, for a project on Chronic Grief, entitled *Routes of Sorrow*.

PLAYERS – 3 MARCH 2019

FLUTE	Sue Hurst Rachel Wright		Ruth Harper Misha Brazier Tope
+ PICCOLO	Kate Geary		Jennie Wood Alice Little
OBOE	Alan Evans Lorna Rennie		Annie Thomas Katie Perkins
CLARINET	Barbara Stuart Jackie Bushell	VIOLIN 2	Louise Graham * Jeanette Thomas Rosie Bruce
BASSOON	Mike Dowling Will Grainger		Eleanor Bagg Alison Forrow Noreen Tyson
HORN	Sam Dunwoody Steve Guard Joel Allred Geoff Haines	VIOLA	Heather Birt * Christina Everson Alison Garnett
TRUMPET	Jeremy Wood Thomas James		Margarete Lucas Katherine Baker Matt Coatsworth
TROMBONE	Stuart Wood Becky Maglone Maria Palmer	CELLO	Spike Wilson * Jude Barnby Martha Wiltshire
TUBA	Matt Sanders		Polly Silk Rachael Rendell Andrew Rendell
TIMPANI + PERCUSSION	Justin Rhodes Shirley Day Sue Woolhouse	DOUBLE BASS	Chris Seddon Richard Hodby
VIOLIN 1	Kate Bailey * Caroline Churchill		

* professional string section leaders

DCO WOULD LIKE TO THANK...

Principal sponsor Henley Audio – www.henleyaudio.co.uk

Special thanks Dr Jon Spiro, Chris Fletcher-Campbell, Sue Hurst,
Pam and Alun Evans

ABOUT DCO

The continuing expansion of Didcot is bringing more orchestral musicians and ever-larger potential concert audiences to the area. Didcot Concert Orchestra, founded in 2017, is the first high-quality amateur concert-giving symphony orchestra based in Didcot. It aims to bring together the best players, so participation is by invitation or audition. Professional players lead each of the string sections. Players meet for four rehearsals before each concert, and DCO gives three concerts every year. DCO's repertoire focuses on concert classics from the Romantic era, and includes tuneful unjustly neglected works from this period – at least one such "rare gem" in each concert. DCO is not-for-profit, and is underwritten by founders Jackie and Geoff Bushell. If you are interested in playing in or sponsoring future concerts, please see our Facebook page or visit www.didcotconcertorchestra.org.uk.



DCO is a member of Making Music, which provides advice, support and resources for leisure-time musicians and music groups across the UK.

NEXT CONCERTS

Sunday 9 June 2019 at 4pm at Cornerstone

Reznicek	Donna Diana: Overture
Glazunov	Serenade no 1
Bruch	Violin Concerto no 1 in G minor, with Leo Appel
Duparc	Danse Lente
Duparc	Extase (orchestrated Bushell)
Bizet	Symphony in C

Sunday 6 October 2019 at 4pm at Cornerstone

Rachmaninov	The Rock – Symphonic Fantasia
Wagner	Tannhäuser: Prelude and Venusberg Music
Rimsky-Korsakov	Scheherazade

Sunday 8 March 2020 at 4pm at Cornerstone

Butterworth	A Shropshire Lad
Suk	Fairy Tale – suite for large orchestra
Franck	Symphony in D minor

Future concerts are on Sunday 21 June 2020 and Sunday 4 October 2020. Please see further information at www.didcotconcertorchestra.org.uk