



"Didcot's new symphony orchestra"

Conductor: Geoff Bushell

Leader: Kate Bailey

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Concert **9** – Sunday 2 October 2022

PROGRAMME

Wagner

Parsifal: Prelude Act 1

Anna Kuzina-Rozhdestvenska

Breath of Life

Alfvén

A Legend of the Skerries

Bax

Tintagel

Tchaikovsky

Sleeping Beauty



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PROGRAMME

Parsifal: Prelude Act 1

Richard Wagner (1819-1883)

Parsifal is a three-act "Festival Play" by Richard Wagner, with the libretto by the composer himself loosely based on the 13th-century German epic poem *Parzival of the Minnesänger Wolfram von Eschenbach*, recounting the story of the Arthurian knight Parzival (Percival) and his quest for the Holy Grail. First conceived in 1857, Wagner didn't complete it until 25 years later. The Prelude to Act 1 is largely composed from the work's thematic motifs. It begins slowly and ponderously with a rising scale to introduce the epic tale, and builds emotionally and majestically to wondrous climaxes, only to revert suddenly to pious reflection. Six silent pauses determine the fundamental structure, yet the music seems to continue through the pauses, without ever repeating itself. Thus Wagner's last work achieves new heights in demonstrating his unique gift for melody, harmony and orchestration.

Breath of Life

Anna Kuzina-Rozhdestvenska

At the time of the outbreak of war in Ukraine, Didcot Concert Orchestra decided that it wanted to support a Ukrainian composer by performing one of their works. Following up the excellent suggestion of player Charlie Vereker, conductor Geoff Bushell made contact with Anna Kuzina-Rozhdestvenska in Kyiv, leading to the first performance of a chamber orchestra version of *Breath of Life* in this concert, and the intention for DCO to perform a full symphony orchestra version in May 2023.

Anna Kuzina-Rozhdestvenska was born in Simferopol in 1984, the eldest of five children. In 1998, she graduated with honours in Piano and entered the theoretical department of the Tchaikovsky Simferopol Music School, which she graduated externally with honours in 2002. Studying composition with outstanding Ukrainian composer, Hero of Ukraine Yevhen Stankovych at the National Music Academy, she gained a masters degree in 2006, graduating from an assistantship-internship in 2009.

Anna Kuzina-Rozhdestvenska is a recipient of the scholarship of the President of Ukraine (2002–2006, 2008–2009), laureate of international competitions of pianists and composers in Ukraine (2001), France (2002, 2003) and Italy (2004), and a regular participant of international music festivals.



Anna describes her musical language as "*completely connected with the peculiarity of subtle, romantic compositional nature*". Most of the author's music is marked by romantic sublimity, inspiration, bright solemnity, as in the piano concerto, which became the diploma work of the young composer.

The creative heritage of the author is represented by works of various genres and forms – from small chamber-instrumental and chamber-vocal compositions to large-scale opuses. The orchestral opus *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* (2006) is one of Anna's first iconic large-scale works and has been performed several times by Ukrainian state orchestras, with the composer performing the solo part. Anna has composed over 50 works for piano solo. Anna's creative output also consists of significant choral and orchestral works, many based on biblical texts. The oratorio *In Memoria* for bass, mixed choir and symphony orchestra is based on the text of Psalm 87, and was given a large-scale performance in 2015. Other orchestral works include *Slavic Overture* for brass band (2005) and *Symphony-concerto for viola/violin and orchestra* (2011/14).

Many of the composer's works have been performed by leading orchestral and choral ensembles and soloists. More than once, the author's compositions were performed in the Column Hall named after M.V. Lysenko of the National Philharmonic of Ukraine, the Concert Hall named after S. Lyudkevich of the Lviv Regional Philharmonic, on the stage of Mykola Lysenko Kharkiv National Academic Theater of Opera and Ballet, in the halls of the P.I. Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine, and the National Union of Composers of Ukraine.

In July 2022, London vocal ensemble Apollo5 commissioned the work *Agnus Dei* for five voices and tubular bells (on a liturgical text), dedicated in light of the memory of the countless victims of the war in Ukraine.



Anna writes about her piece:

"The miniature Breath of Life is one of the pieces that is especially significant for me, which is named after the first and only book of poems of the same name written by my father, Boris Kuzin (the collection Breath of Life was published three months before his premature death, in 2011). Being an agricultural engineer, my father was a poet by vocation – a Poet in his Soul. These poems convey his inexhaustible Love for Life, for his family, children (my father and mother have five children, I am the eldest), love for the native land and nature, his feelings of human values lost in the modern world are conveyed ..."

My Breath of Life was written long before today, in 2015 – it became a reflection on my father's collection of poems, but it was also a reaction to the tragic events in Ukraine in 2014. In this work, along with dramatic moments, enlightened music also sounds. First of all, this "major" light is the breath of Life itself, given to us from Above and being the most priceless gift! I am immensely glad that Mr. Bushell's creative suggestion prompted me to return to my compositions again and create a version for chamber orchestra (in the summer 2022). I am happy that Breath of Life will come alive again under the direction of the respected Geoff Bushell performed by the wonderful Didcot Concert Orchestra. I believe that Music is our Salvation! It is the true Breath of Life, which fills us with unique internal energy and strength, allowing us to preserve and enrich the Human Soul.

I dedicate the premiere performance of Breath of Life to the blessed memory of Queen Elizabeth II, who served her people with love, steadfastness and lifelong devotion, and also provided invaluable support to Ukraine in its most tragic hour. Eternal memory and gratitude to Her Majesty!"

A Legend of the Skerries

Hugo Alfvén (1872-1960)

The geographical remoteness of Scandinavia has perhaps contributed to the obscurity of Swedish music, but the listener who is prepared to explore beyond the mainstream may be delighted with a tuneful voyage of discovery. A violinist, composer, artist and author, Hugo Alfvén was accustomed to spending his holidays in the archipelago of 24,000 islands off the coast of Stockholm, where he had a small summer home. This place, combined with real-life romance, formed the inspiration for several of his works.

Immediately following the completion of his best known work *Midsummer Vigil* (*Swedish Rhapsody no 1*), Alfvén began to compose *En skärgårdssägen* (sometimes translated as *A Tale from the Archipelago*) in 1903. "*The Stockholm archipelago appeared in gloomy, autumnal attire*", Alfvén wrote, "*and I yearned to write a work which would depict this nocturnal tragedy in storm and moonbeams above the straits and bays*". In the score, Alfvén wrote that the work is "*lyrical in feeling. It depicts the seaward skerries on an Autumn night in glittering moonlight, when the storm thunders, in dreaming quiet and the struggle for existence. Throughout, these scenes of nature offer a parallel to the dark joy of human emotion.*" The piece was first performed in 1905 at the Royal Theatre in Stockholm with the composer himself conducting. This evening's performance is believed to be only the fourth amateur performance in the UK, Geoff Bushell having also conducted the third.

Interval – 20 minutes – refreshments downstairs

Tintagel

Arnold Bax (1883-1953)

Bax provides an evocative description of this piece in the preface to the full score: "*Though detailing no definite programme this work is intended to evoke a tone-picture of the castle-crowned cliff of Tintagel, and more particularly the wide distances of the Atlantic as seen from the cliffs of Cornwall on a sunny but not windless summer day. In the middle section of the piece it may be imagined that with the increasing tumult of the sea arise memories of the historical and legendary association of the place, especially those connected with King Arthur, King Mark, and Tristram and Isolde*". Bax is making reference to his inclusion of a quotation from Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*. *Tintagel* is the legendary birthplace of King Arthur of round table fame, and the burial place of Isolde. Sir Arnold Edward Trevor Bax, KCVO, was born in Streatham, South London, but developed a great affinity for Ireland. Celtic flavour is apparent in *Tintagel*, together with the restless surging of the sea. Much of Bax's writing is inspired by a world of Celtic half-light, and many of his atmospheric pieces deserve a much wider hearing.

Sleeping Beauty: ballet excerpts

Peter Tchaikovsky (1840-93)

- I Introduction and Lilac Fairy (Act 1 introduction and no 4)
- II Rose Adagio (Act 1 no 8a)
- III Characteristic Dance (Act 3 no 24)
- IV Entracte (Act 2 no 18) – violin solo: Kate Bailey
- V Panorama (Act 2 no 17)
- VI Sleeping Beauty Waltz (Act 1 no 6)

Sleeping Beauty is the second of Tchaikovsky's three ballets, written in 1888/9 between *Swan Lake* (1877) and *Nutcracker* (1892). This performance is of the ballet suite opus 66a, with the addition of the *Entracte*. At Princess Aurora's christening, wicked fairy Carabosse seeks revenge for being left off the guest list by casting a spell, announcing that when Aurora reaches the age of 16, she will prick her finger on a spindle and die. The good Lilac Fairy softens the curse so that Aurora will merely sleep for 100 years and then be awakened by a Prince's kiss. At Aurora's 16th birthday celebrations, Carabosse sneaks in with the gift of a spindle – Aurora pricks her finger. The Lilac Fairy extends her spell so that the entire kingdom falls into slumber at the same time. A century later, the Lilac Fairy guides Prince Désiré to find and kiss Aurora, awakening her. A triumphant marriage ceremony follows.

Programme notes by Geoff Bushell



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ABOUT DCO

Didcot Concert Orchestra (DCO) was founded in 2017 by local amateur musicians Jackie and Geoff Bushell. Realising that the rapidly growing town was bringing ever more orchestral musicians and larger potential concert audiences to the area, Jackie and Geoff felt it could now support its own full-size performing orchestra and become a cultural destination for classical music. Audiences in the Didcot area would then be able to experience high-quality classical orchestral music without needing to travel to London or Oxford, at an accessible price. Participation in classical music, whether as a listener or a performer, has been shown to bring many benefits in health and wellbeing to individuals and to the community.

The orchestra aims to give local musicians and audiences the opportunity to experience a very high standard of performance. This level of attainment is achieved by personal invitation or audition of players, and through the support and encouragement of professional string section leaders. Players meet for just four rehearsals before each concert, usually over a ten day period.

DCO gave its inaugural performance in early 2018 and programmes three concerts each year, all at Cornerstone. Focusing on popular classical music from the Romantic era, each concert also offers new experiences to both audiences and players by including at least one "rare gem" that is very seldom, if ever, heard in the public concert hall. Future programmes are listed on page 12 and on DCO's website at www.didcotconcertorchestra.org.uk.

Sponsorship

DCO is a not-for-profit unincorporated charitable association, underwritten by the founders. Putting on concerts incurs significant costs which our generous sponsors and benefactors help to defray. The orchestra welcomes offers of sponsorship from philanthropic businesses, organisations and individuals who are keen to support the development of performing arts in south Oxfordshire. If you can help is put on future concerts, please contact us via www.didcotconcertorchestra.org.uk.

Participation

If you play an orchestral instrument to a high standard, and are interested in participating in future concerts, DCO would love to hear from you. Contact us via www.didcotconcertorchestra.org.uk or come and speak to us at a concert.



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

CONDUCTOR

Geoff Bushell

Geoff Bushell studied conducting with George Hurst, Denise Ham, Michael Rose and Adrian Leaper. He has been conductor and musical director of Oxford-based St Giles Orchestra since 1983, and regularly conducts Abingdon Symphony Orchestra and other orchestras in the Oxfordshire area. Highlights of Geoff's conducting career have included large-scale performances of Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Verdi's *Requiem* and Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* with 200 performers, and a recording of Walton's *Crown Imperial March* which was broadcast on the BBC One Show. With a growing repertoire of over 400 different works conducted in public concerts, Geoff is renowned for introducing players and audiences to lesser-known but unjustly neglected romantic repertoire, and has conducted several UK premieres of these. Geoff also composes romantic-style pieces, including four commissions from Abingdon and District Musical Society to celebrate its major anniversaries. In 2022, Geoff was invited to conduct the newly-formed 70-piece Aylesbury Vale Concert Orchestra in a charity concert featuring international guitar soloist Xuefei Yang and Classic FM presenter John Brunning at Aylesbury's Waterside Theatre.

LEADER

Kate Bailey

Kate began her violin studies with Pamela Spofforth at the age of nine, and was an early member of Pro Corda, where she gained a love of chamber music. Whilst reading Music at University College, Oxford, she studied with David Ogden and Emanuel Hurwitz, and then went on to study with Erika Klemperer at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Kate has played in the string quartet, OXUS for the last ten years, specialising in approachable contemporary works such as Steve Reich's *Different Trains* and Elvis Costello's *The Juliet Letters*. She is also a founder member of The Holywell Ensemble (formed in 1984), a flexible chamber group renowned for its committed and evocative performances of British chamber music on CD and in the concert hall, which was described by the BBC Music Magazine as "one of the most important chamber music groups on the British musical scene". Kate lives in Oxford, and regularly leads a number of orchestras in the area. She is also a freelance orchestral player and has performed a number of concertos, including Beethoven's *Triple Concerto* with her colleagues from The Holywell Ensemble, and in March 2018 she performed Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* with viola player Heather Birt.

OXUS

DCO's four string section leaders

Kate Bailey and Louise Graham (violins), Heather Birt (viola) and Spike Wilson (cello), 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. OXUS frequently works 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*.

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PERFORMERS – 2 OCTOBER 2022

FLUTE	Sue Hurst Kate Geary	VIOLIN 1	Kate Bailey * Caroline Churchill
PICCOLO	Annette Idler		Misha Brazier Tope Neil Thomas
OBOE	Alan Evans Lorna Rennie		Iris van Pijlen Gillie Watson
COR ANGLAIS	Matthias Winkel		Eleanor Bagg
CLARINET	Lisa Walker Jackie Bushell Lindsey Iles	VIOLIN 2	Louise Graham * Hamish Overend Paul Chesson
BASS CLARINET	Robert Sales		Rosie Bruce John Mann Pat Field
BASSOON	Will Grainger John Abramson Bea Waterfield		Mia Cokljat Jeanette Thomas
CONTRABASN	Frank Jordan	VIOLA	Heather Birt * Rowena Overend Gill Barbour
HORN	Rachel Grovenor Sean Frankcom Steve Guard Paul Willett		Margarete Lucas Louise Hill Catherine Upfold
TRUMPET	Thomas James Alison Davidson Vere Lintern-Smyth	CELLO	Spike Wilson * Jude Barnby Polly Silk Sarah Higgins
TROMBONE	Nigel Howard Charlie Vereker Stephanie Howard		Lisa Rees Sarah Sparrow
TUBA	Matt Sanders	DOUBLE BASS	Chris Seddon Richard Hodby
TIMPANI PERCUSSION	Chris Fletcher-Campbell Jackie Mann		* professional players
HARP	Llywelyn Ifan Jones *	Total 57	

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NEXT CONCERTS

10 Sunday 5 February 2023 at 4pm at Cornerstone

Saint Saëns	<i>Phaéton</i>
Howard Hanson	<i>Symphony no 2 "Romantic"</i>
Goldmark	<i>Sakuntala Overture</i>
Goldmark	<i>The Queen of Sheba: Ballet Music</i>
Tchaikovsky	<i>Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture</i>

11 Sunday 14 May 2023 at 4pm at Cornerstone

Franck	<i>Les Éolides</i>
Debussy	<i>Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune</i>
Anna Kuzina- Rozhdestvenska	<i>Breath of Life (version for full orchestra)</i>
Fauré	<i>Pélleas et Mélisande</i>
Vaughan Williams	<i>The Wasps: Overture</i>
Mendelssohn	<i>Symphony no 3 "Scottish"</i>

12 Sunday 8 October 2023 at 4pm at Cornerstone

Rossini	<i>William Tell: Overture</i>
Dohnányi	<i>Symphonic Minutes</i>
Vaughan Williams	<i>Tuba Concerto (Sam Elliott)</i>
Brahms	<i>Symphony no 3 in F</i>

13 Sunday 4 February 2024 at 4pm at Cornerstone

Goldmark	<i>The Queen of Sheba: Overture</i>
Karłowicz	<i>Eternal Songs</i>
Elgar	<i>In the South</i>
Respighi	<i>The Pines of Rome</i>

14 Sunday 19 May 2024 at 4pm at Cornerstone

A concert of orchestral and vocal music, showcasing the beautiful voice of soprano Hannah Fraser-Mackenzie, including a variety of shorter pieces in different styles – the overture to Grieg's *Peer Gynt* and three orchestral songs, a gorgeous piece by Granados, a sparkling overture by Wolf-Ferrari and Offenbach's incomparable overture to *Orpheus in the Underworld*. Johann Strauss's glittering *Die Fledermaus Overture* opens the second half, followed by a very tuneful suite by Ippolitov-Ivanov, and Hannah returns centre-stage to sing Strauss's *Voices of Spring*.

Please see further information at www.didcotconcertorchestra.org.uk