



Conductor: Geoff Bushell

Leader: Kate Bailey

Honorary President: Lord Vaizey of Didcot

Concert **10** – Sunday 5 February 2023

PROGRAMME

Saint Saëns

Phaéton

Howard Hanson

Symphony no 2 "Romantic"

Goldmark

Sakuntala Overture

Goldmark

The Queen of Sheba: Ballet Music

Tchaikovsky

Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture



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PROGRAMME

Phaéton, op 39

Camille Saint Saëns (1835-1921)

A Paris-born musical prodigy, Saint Saëns made his concert debut on the piano at the age of ten, and after studying at the Paris Conservatoire, he became a successful freelance pianist and composer, in demand in Europe and the Americas. He was keen on the more modern music of Schumann, Liszt and Wagner, but his own compositions were more conservative. Saint Saëns' study and posts as organist in Paris influenced his *Symphony no 3*, featuring prominent organ solos. There were five symphonies in all, five piano concertos and three violin concertos in an opus list of well over two hundred works.

In writing symphonic poems, Saint Saëns followed the example of his close friend Franz Liszt. In the second poem, *Phaéton*, of 1875, as described in the score: "*Phaéton has obtained the permission of the Sun god Helios, his father, to drive his*

chariot through the heavens. But his inexperienced hands are unable to control the fiery steeds. The flaming chariot is thrown off course. It comes so close to the earth that the whole world is in danger of being set ablaze, when Zeus [God of the sky, lightning and thunder] strikes down the reckless Phaéton with his thunderbolt." The latter is depicted by a three-timpani rolled chord and percussion. The concluding serene slow theme for flute and clarinet is beautifully scored.

Symphony no 2 "Romantic"

Howard Hanson (1896-1981)

Howard Hanson was an American composer, educator, conductor, author, orchestrator, band leader and champion of American classical music. Born of immigrant Swedish parents, Hanson attended the forerunner of the Juilliard School in New York City, and was soon hired as a music theory and composition teacher in California. After winning the Prix de Rome in 1921 for two of his compositions, he was able to spend three years studying in Italy, where he composed his *Symphony no 1 "Nordic"*. During his stay in Italy, he received advice from Respighi, as a result of which Hanson credited Respighi as a significant influence on his use of orchestral textures and instrumentation. Hanson also claimed he was influenced by Rimsky-Korsakov, Holst, Palestrina and Wagner. In 1924, George Eastman (of Kodak camera fame) chose Hanson to be director of his Eastman School of Music, where he built a high-quality school and provided opportunities for commissioning and performing American music. In 1944, Hanson won a Pulitzer Prize for his *Symphony no 4 "Requiem"*, and received numerous other awards including the George Foster Peabody Award for Outstanding Entertainment in Music in 1946.

In 1930, Hanson completed his *Symphony no 2 "Romantic"*. This was a commission from Serge Koussevitsky for the 50th anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. It is scored for a moderate-sized orchestra consisting of triple woodwind, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion and harp. The symphony is in three movements, in the keys of D flat, C and D flat. Though not following a traditional symphonic structure, many of the symphony's themes recur throughout the piece to give it an overall unity. The horn writing is very beautiful.

After the 1930 Boston premiere, Hanson presented the work numerous times in concert; and also acted as conductor for two commercial recordings – one in 1939 and one in 1958. Such was the piece's popularity that amidst Jerry Goldsmith's score for the 1979 science-fiction film *Alien*, at the very end of the movie, as Ripley blasts the creature out of the airlock, and then incinerates the beast with the ship's engines, something familiar is heard in the background. Unbeknown to Goldsmith or to Hanson, the director Ridley Scott had decided to replace the end credits of Goldsmith's score with the entire slow horn-laden first movement passage from Hanson's *Symphony no 2*. Hanson was none too pleased, but decided not to go to court, as the increasing public knowledge of his music was beneficial. Later, in

1982, while John Williams was working on the score of the Spielberg movie, *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*, Williams explains, during interviews, that Hanson's music, and especially the "*Romantic*" *Symphony*, provided a strong guide for his new score.

Interval – 20 minutes – refreshments downstairs

Śakuntalā Overture, op 13

Carl Goldmark (1830-1915)

Carl Goldmark was born in Keszthely, Hungary, on 2 January 1830, one of over 20 children. His first musical influence was village dance violin music, and despite concerts of his own works, fame was not to come until his *String Quartet*, op 8 of 1860. The overture *Śakuntalā* (1865) and his opera *The Queen of Sheba* (1875) placed him in the forefront of musical life of Vienna. Goldmark studied under Sibelius' teacher Robert Fuchs, and composed for orchestra six overtures, two scherzos and two symphonies, including the *Rustic Wedding Symphony*. The overture tells in soaring melodies and rich Wagnerian harmonies of the love of King Dusjanta for the water-nymph *Śakuntalā*, in the Hindu sixth century Mahabharata drama by Khalidāsa. Trills denote spring waters, and the love theme is announced by clarinets and cellos. The King gives *Śakuntalā* a ring, but rejects her when the ring is lost. Its subsequent finding spells eternal happiness for the couple.

The Queen of Sheba: Ballet Music

Goldmark

Die Königin von Saba (The Queen of Sheba) is an opera – the first of seven that Goldmark composed – In four acts. The German libretto by Hermann Salomon Mosenthal sets a love triangle into the context of the Queen of Sheba's visit to the court of King Solomon, as recorded in the Bible. Goldmark's interest in the subject of the Queen of Sheba was inspired by his pupil, mezzo-soprano Caroline von Gomperz-Bettelheim, whose beauty was once compared to that of the Queen of Sheba by a friend of Goldmark. Bettelheim possessed a striking voice and the role was written to show off her wide range and dramatic skills. However, Bettelheim never performed the role, as the opera took twelve years to compose from its inception in 1863 to first performance at the Hofoper (now the State Opera) in Vienna, on 10 March 1875.

This short extract from the opera's *Ballet Music* demonstrates the composer's gifts for melody and harmony, which will be further demonstrated in the *Overture* from *The Queen of Sheba* which will feature in a DCO concert in 2024.

Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture Peter Tchaikovsky (1840-93)

In 1869, Tchaikovsky was a 28-year-old professor at the Moscow Conservatory. Having written his first symphony and an opera, he next composed a symphonic poem entitled *Fatum*. Tchaikovsky dedicated it to Balakirev and sent it to him to conduct in St Petersburg, but it received only a lukewarm reception. Balakirev then wrote a detailed letter to Tchaikovsky explaining the defects, and suggested a new piece on a Shakespearian theme – even including a plan and suggested keys. Tchaikovsky duly composed this, but Balakirev did not believe the original version of 1869 was up to his best, so he rewrote the overture twice more, in 1870 and 1880.

Although styled an *Overture-Fantasy* by the composer, the overall design is a symphonic poem in sonata form with an introduction and an epilogue. The final 1880 version begins with a solemn chant (clarinets and bassoons) denoting Friar Laurence, followed by plucked strings heralding the storm which describes the feud between the Capulets and the Montagues. Cor anglais and violas announce the famous love theme, and Juliet responds with a soaring string melody. Tchaikovsky subsequently contemplated expanding the work into an opera, but only got as far as writing a fully-scored love scene *Duo* with soprano and tenor solos.

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 partly to defray. The orchestra welcomes offers of sponsorship from philanthropic businesses, organisations and individuals who are keen to support the performing arts in south Oxfordshire. If you can help us 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

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*.

SECTION LEADERS

Louise Graham, violin

Louise Graham lives in Headington and is a freelance violinist and teacher. She studied under Béla Dekany at the Guildhall School of Music, plays in various local orchestras, leads the Erato Chamber Orchestra and is a member of OXUS. Louise teaches privately and for the Oxfordshire County Music Service.

Heather Birt, viola

Heather Birt works as a freelance viola player with many period ensembles including Academy of Ancient Music, Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra, The King's Consort, The English Concert and The Mozartists. Heather has performed in several BBC Promenade concerts and appears on many recordings, including the highly regarded Pachelbel Vespers CD with The King's Singers. Heather also plays Double Bass in Allen Beechey's Bright Stars of Jazz, and has performed at numerous jazz festivals in Britain and Europe.

Spike Wilson, cello

Spike Wilson won a choral exhibition to The Queen's College, Oxford, and now leads a busy musical life combining cello-playing in chamber groups (including The Holywell Ensemble and OXUS) and orchestras, with coaching chamber groups and directing several school and youth orchestras. He coaches for the Oxford Cello School and the Oxford Chamber Course and is much in demand as a cello teacher, with many adult and younger pupils.

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PERFORMERS – 5 FEBRUARY 2023

FLUTE	Sue Hurst Sally Hamilton	VIOLIN 1	Kate Bailey ★ Caroline Churchill
PICCOLO	Mia Gaudern		Rosie Bruce Eleanor Bagg
OBOE	Alan Evans Aldus Whitfield		Iris van Pijlen Gillie Watson
COR ANGLAIS	Matthias Winkel		John Mann
CLARINET	Lisa Walker Jackie Bushell	VIOLIN 2	Louise Graham ★ Jane Terepin Hamish Overend
BASSOON	Will Grainger Andrew Mackintosh		Pat Field Rhiannon Parkinson
CONTRABSN	Frank Jordan		Alison Forrow Jeanette Thomas
HORN	Joel Allred Sean Frankcom Steve Guard Paul Willett	VIOLA	Heather Birt ★ Rowena Overend Margarete Lucas Louise Hill Robert Spencer
TRUMPET	Alison Davidson Michael Bird Jeremy Wood	CELLO	Spike Wilson ★ Polly Silk Sarah Sparrow Lisa Rees Andrew Clark-Maxwell Jude Barnby
TROMBONE	Nigel Howard Charlie Vereker Stephanie Howard		
TUBA	Matt Sanders	DOUBLE	Chris Seddon
TIMPANI	Chris Brannick	BASS	Richard Hodby
PERCUSSION	Jackie Mann Chris Humphries		★ professional musicians
HARP	Jenny Vereker		Total 53 players

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NEXT CONCERTS

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

Verbytsky	<i>State Anthem of Ukraine</i>
Scriabin	<i>Symphony no 1 (first movement)</i>
Glazunov	<i>Raymonda: Ballet Suite</i>
Tchaikovsky	<i>Symphony no 1 "Winter Daydreams"</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*.

15 Sunday 6 October 2024 at 4pm at Cornerstone

Coates	<i>The Three Elizabeths</i>
Harty	<i>With the Wild Geese</i>
Elgar	<i>Pomp & Circumstance March no 4 in G</i>
Delius	<i>Florida Suite</i>

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