



Conductor: Geoff Bushell

Leader: Kate Bailey

Honorary President: Lord Vaizey of Didcot

Concert **11** – Sunday 14 May 2023

PROGRAMME

Franck	Les Éolides
Debussy	Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune
Anna Kuzina- Rozhdestvenska	Breath of Life
Fauré	Pélleas et Mélisande
Mendelssohn	Symphony no 3 "Scottish"



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PROGRAMME

Les Éolides, op 26

César Franck (1822-1890)

César Franck spent much of his life in the organ loft and as a teacher. His composition pupils include Vincent D'Indy, Henri Duparc, Ernest Chausson and Paul Dukas. Teaching prevented him becoming a significant composer in his early years, and indeed most of his most famous works were written after the age of 60.

The initial inspiration for *Les Éolides* (The Breezes) came from a poem by Leconte de Lisle about the Aeolids, daughters of the keeper of the winds Aeolus. Begun early in 1875, composition didn't come easily until Franck went on a summer holiday in the Languedoc region of France. Orchestration was completed in June 1876, but organising a performance was difficult, as at that time the Société Nationale de Musique rarely organised orchestral concerts. Eventually the piece was premiered on 13 May 1877 at the 70th concert of the Société in the Salle Érard, Paris, and was

well received by the public. A successful revival of the piece in February 1882 under Charles Lamoureux's baton might have encouraged Franck to compose his next symphonic poem, *Le Chasseur Maudit* (The Accursed Huntsman), and the orchestral colours of *Les Éolides* made their way into his last symphonic poem, *Psyché* (1888) – as played by DCO in its inaugural concert in 2018.

Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Music was never the same again after the first performance of Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*. It is considered a turning point in the history of music, because of its departure from conventional structure, tonality, harmony and orchestration. The composition was inspired by the poem *L'après-midi d'un faune* by Stéphane Mallarmé, and later formed the basis for the ballet *Afternoon of a Faun*, choreographed by Vaslav Nijinsky. A faun is a half-human half-goat mythological creature from Greek and Roman mythology.

Debussy himself wrote about his piece: *"The music of this prelude is a very free illustration of Mallarmé's beautiful poem. By no means does it claim to be a synthesis of it. Rather there is a succession of scenes through which pass the desires and dreams of the faun in the heat of the afternoon. Then, tired of pursuing the timorous flight of nymphs and naiads, he succumbs to intoxicating sleep, in which he can finally realize his dreams of possession in universal Nature"*.

Breath of Life

Anna Kuzina-Rozhdestvenska

Anna Kuzina-Rozhdestvenska was born in Simferopol, Ukraine, in 1984. 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 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.

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 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."

Breath of Life was commissioned and performed by DCO in its small orchestra version in 2022, and has since been performed by Banbury Symphony Orchestra. This is the third performance, featuring an enlarged orchestra. The fourth performance, for full orchestra, will be given by St Giles Orchestra on 8 July 2023.

Pelléas et Mélisande, op 80

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

- I – Prélude (quasi adagio)
- II – La Fileuse (andantino quasi allegretto)
- III – Sicilienne (allegro molto moderato)
- IV – Death of Mélisande (molto adagio)

This suite of four movements is derived from a total of nineteen scenes of incidental music to Maurice Maeterlinck's play about forbidden, doomed love. Debussy, Schoenberg and Sibelius later used the poem as inspiration for pieces with the same name. The first movement opens with a slow theme, perhaps suggesting Mélisande's reserved personality. A second romantic theme with cello solo and woodwind represents Mélisande's future husband, Golaud. Horn calls near the end of the movement suggest Golaud's discovery of Mélisande in the forest. *La Fileuse* is a spinning song, featuring a gentle oboe melody over imitative strings. The *Sicilienne*, although in the sad key of G minor was reused from Fauré's earlier incidental music to Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. The last movement, in D minor, is inescapably tragic, with a theme of lamentation for clarinets and flutes. There are echoes of Mélisande's song before the opening theme returns fortissimo, then time seems to stop as a last echo in the solo flute leads to the final chord. This last movement was played at Fauré's own funeral.

Symphony no 3 "Scottish"

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

I – Andante con moto; Allegro un poco agitato

II – Vivace non troppo

III – Adagio

IV – Allegro vivacissimo; Allegro maestoso assai

In April 1829 the twenty-year-old Felix Mendelssohn left his family home in Berlin to embark on the Grand Tour which was expected of any young man of means in the early 19th century. Instead of the usual destinations of France or Italy, Mendelssohn started his journey in London where a friend of the family, Karl Klingemann, lived – the two were to undertake their journey together. Members of the Mendelssohn family were avid readers of the novels of Sir Walter Scott, so a tour of Scotland was an important inclusion. A visit to the ruins of Holyrood Chapel in Edinburgh provided the inspiration for the opening of the first movement of his third symphony, the "Scottish". Mendelssohn wrote in a letter to his family:

"In the deep twilight we went today to the palace where Queen Mary lived and loved...The chapel below is now roofless. Grass and ivy thrive there and at the broken altar where Mary was crowned Queen of Scotland. Everything is ruined, decayed, and the clear heavens pour in. I think I have found there the beginning of my "Scottish" Symphony."

The musical language of the opening is melancholy, suggestive of fog, sea and rocky coasts. The sadness which pervades much of the first movement gives way only for a realistic musical depiction of a storm. A few days after his Edinburgh visit, Mendelssohn and his companion visited the Island of Staffa, which was the inspiration to his overture *The Hebrides*. The dance-like second movement has an effervescent theme in Scottish folk style, announced by a solo clarinet, then tossed between the instruments. When a slow movement is placed third in symphonic music it often has a particular dreamy and intimate quality (compare Rachmaninov's *Second Symphony*) and this is no exception. Violins sing a melody of intimacy and beauty – a song without words. Although energetic outbursts occur several times, each is quelled and the gentler mood prevails. The last movement starts with a jagged dotted theme, returning to the energy level of the first movement, but this thrust subsides with a chromatic passage in the woodwind, and the minor key turns to a happier major with a closing hymn in a more noble tempo, which is thought to represent the gathering of the clans, and thus giving the symphony an uplifting seal of triumph.

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 nine 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 the back of this programme 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 other orchestras in the 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, a recording of Walton's *Crown Imperial March* broadcast on the BBC One Show, and being invited in 2022 to conduct the newly-formed Aylesbury Vale Concert Orchestra in charity concerts which have already featured international guitar soloist Xuefei Yang and Classic FM presenter John Brunning at Aylesbury's Waterside Theatre. 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, of which he has conducted several UK premieres. As well as playing the horn in a number of orchestras, Geoff also composes romantic-style pieces, including five commissions from Abingdon and District Musical Society to celebrate its major anniversaries.

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*.

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PERFORMERS – 14 MAY 2023

CONDUCTOR	Geoff Bushell	VIOLIN 1	Kate Bailey ★ Jane Kane Eleanor Bagg Rosie Bruce Iris van Pijlen Mhairi Robertson John Kane
LEADER	Kate Bailey		
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FLUTE	Sue Hurst Kate Geary		
OBOE	Alan Evans Sophie Hebden	VIOLIN 2	Louise Graham ★ Cathie Ng Rhiannon Parkinson Alison Forrow Jennifer Robinson Pat Field Jeanette Thomas
COR ANGLAIS	Sophie Hebden		
CLARINET	Lisa Walker Jackie Bushell		
BASSOON	Will Grainger John Abramson	VIOLA	Heather Birt ★ Rhiannon Frankcom Robert Spencer Margarete Lucas Louise Hill Catherine Upfold
HORN	Sean Frankcom Helen Jenkins Eoin Dineen Brian O'Rourke		
TRUMPET	Thomas James Michael Bird	CELLO	Spike Wilson ★ Jude Barnby Polly Silk Lisa Rees Sarah Higgins Andrew Clark-Maxwell
TIMPANI	Cameron Alsop		
PERCUSSION	Jackie Mann		
HARP	Anna Lockett	DOUBLE BASS	Chris Seddon Richard Hodby Tim Baker

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NEXT CONCERTS

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 soprano voice of Hannah Fraser-Mackenzie, including a variety of shorter pieces in different styles – excerpts from Grieg's *Peer Gynt* incidental music, 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>

16 February 2025

Tchaikovsky	<i>Nutcracker Suite</i>
Henry Hadley	<i>The Ocean</i>
Dvořák	<i>The Noon Witch</i>
Suk	<i>Symphonic Poem: Prague</i>

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