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Conductor: Geoff Bushell

Leader: Kate Bailey

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Concert **12** – Sunday 8 October 2023

PROGRAMME

Scriabin	Symphony no 1 – first movement
Glazunov	Raymonda – ballet suite
Tchaikovsky	Symphony no 1 "Winter Daydreams"



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PROGRAMME

Symphony no 1, op 26

Alexander Scriabin (1871-1915)

I – Lento

Scriabin was a Russian composer and virtuoso pianist, greatly influenced by the music of Chopin. He was born in Moscow into a Russian noble family. His mother having died when he was one, his father Nicolai then left for Turkey to follow a military career, leaving Alexander to be raised by his grandmother, great-aunt and aunt. The aunt was an amateur pianist, and thus the young Alexander was exposed to piano playing from an early age. He later studied piano at the Moscow Conservatory under Arensky, Taneyev and Safonov, and became a noted concert pianist.



As well as his *Piano Concerto in F sharp minor*, Scriabin wrote a number of symphonies and symphonic poems, which are often considered as a symphonic series:

Symphony no 1, op 26 (1899-1900)

Symphony no 2, op 29 (1901)

Symphony no 3 "The Divine Poem", op 43 (1902-1904)

The Poem of Ecstasy (1905-1908)

Prometheus: The Poem of Fire (1910)

A handwritten signature of Alexander Scriabin in cursive script. The signature reads "A. Scriabine".

Scriabin's first symphony, lasting fifty minutes, has an assured quality for his first work in the genre, and it received favourable comment when premiered in full by Safonov in 1901, with a critic later writing that the symphony was "a masterly work of great beauty". However, the last two of the six movements present a spatial challenge to any Didcot performance as they involve a choir and two vocal soloists. Hence this afternoon we are playing only the first movement – but what a first movement! Shimmering strings, romantic woodwind solos and rich harmonies justify playing the seven-minute movement on its own!

Matching DCO's aspiration to bring tuneful music to Didcot, and allow audiences and players to experience classical music rarely heard in the concert hall, this dreamy first movement can best be summed up by an internet reviewer: "*I am obsessed with the first movement ... it is just amazing to me ... it is everything I love in music*".

Raymonda – ballet suite, op 57a Alexander Glazunov (1865-1936)

- I – (a) Moderato – (b) Lento Maestoso
- II – La Traditrice
- III – Moderato – Allegro agitato – Entrée de Raymonda
- IV – Andante (a) Prélude et la Romanesca (b) Prélude et Variation
- V – Entr'acte
- VI – Valse fantastique
- VII – Grand pas d'action – Grand Adagio
- VIII – Variation IV – Raymonda
- IX – (a) Danse des garçons Arabes (b) Entrée des Sarrazins
- X – Entr'acte

The music of Glazunov was initially somewhat eclipsed by Tchaikovsky and the so-called "Mighty Handful" of older Russian composers – Balakirev, Rimsky-Korsakov, Mussorgsky, Cui and Borodin, who collaborated up to 1870. Glazunov began composing at age 11, and was mentored by Belyayev – a wealthy Russian timber merchant and philanthropist. After hearing the music of the teenage Glazunov, Belyayev established a music publishing company and put on concerts of the young composer's music – both of these activities ensuring Glazunov's rightful place alongside his illustrious predecessors. Glazunov directed the St Petersburg Conservatory from 1905, until 1928, when he left the Soviet Union, never to return, settling in Paris in 1932 for what turned out to be the last four years of his life. 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. As well as eight completed symphonies, Glazunov wrote a number of ballets – most notably *The Seasons* (op 67), and also *Scènes de Ballet* (op 52) and *From the Middle Ages* (op 79).



Alexandre Glazunov

Raymonda (op 57) was written in 1896 alongside the great choreographer Marius Petipa for a performance by the Imperial Ballet at the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg. The full two-hour ballet (with Glazunov's movement titles in French) is somewhat unbalanced in concert-hall performances, as the entire third act is wedding music. The 36-minute suite which Glazunov made of the ballet (op 57a) neatly avoids this by using only the Entracte before Act 3 – which makes an effective finale to the suite, preceded by the best orchestral music from the earlier acts. The opening Moderato sounds like a homage to Tchaikovsky, but as the ballet progresses, Glazunov's tuneful melodies and often sumptuous orchestration demonstrate his no lesser mastery of the orchestra.

Interval – 20 minutes – refreshments downstairs

Symphony no 1 "Winter Daydreams"

Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

- I – "Dreams of a Winter Journey": Allegro tranquillo
- II – "Land of Desolation, Land of Mists": Adagio cantabile ma non tanto
- III – Scherzo: Allegro scherzando giocoso
- IV – Finale: Andante lugubre – Allegro maestoso

It was in 1866 that Tchaikovsky set to work on his first symphony with enthusiasm, despite critical rejection of earlier works. One of the greatest challenges he faced was the structure of the work – “all my life I have been much troubled by my inability to grasp and manipulate form in music”. At last, in 1868, the work – opus 13 – was finished, and the Moscow premiere was received with great enthusiasm. After further revisions, the score was finally published in 1875.

Despite the titles Tchaikovsky gave to the first two movements, the symphony does not follow a particular programme. Flutes and bassoons announce the first theme over agitated strings. The bird-like solo clarinet which follows gives us a foretaste into the melodic style of later symphonies. The second movement has a very melancholic feel, with the main solo given to the oboe. After the horns have carried the melody to a climax, the movement ends (as did the first) with a restatement of the opening theme.

The third movement is taken from Tchaikovsky's *Piano Sonata in C# minor* of 1865, and appears to show the influence of Mendelssohn. The uncertain direction of the introduction of the finale gives little clue to the power and frenzied enthusiasm to follow. The pace soon quickens for the first theme, then brass announce a second theme. After a slackening of speed, the strings slowly build up to a climax in a staggered rhythm against the horns until the whole orchestra is galvanised and gallops for home via a long coda of blazing brass and crashing cymbals.



A handwritten signature of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky in cursive script. The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the portrait.

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 since 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*.

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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* The Northbourne Centre is a community space available for hire in Church Street, Didcot. Contact daca.booking@gmail.com for hire enquiries.

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PERFORMERS – 8 OCTOBER 2023

CONDUCTOR	Geoff Bushell	HARP	Helen Coad
LEADER	Kate Bailey	VIOLIN 1	Kate Bailey ★ Marisa Miller Neil Thomas Karen Sancto Misha Brazier Tope Iris van Pijlen Ruth Harper
FLUTE	Sue Hurst Kate Geary Rachel Wright		
PICCOLO	Rachel Wright		
OBOE	Alan Evans Sophie Hebden	VIOLIN 2	Louise Graham ★ Eleanor Bagg Alison Forrow Rhiannon Parkinson Rosie Bruce Jeanette Thomas Pat Field Liz Lochhead
COR ANGLAIS	Sophie Hebden		
CLARINET	Lisa Walker Jackie Bushell Robert Sales		
BASSOON	Will Grainger Bea Waterfield	VIOLA	Heather Birt ★ Katherine Baker Margarete Lucas Louise Hill Catherine Upfold
HORN	Sean Frankcom Helen Jenkins Paul Willett Brian O'Rourke		
TRUMPET	Thomas James Jonathan Shapiro	CELLO	Spike Wilson ★ Jude Barnby James Wilson Sarah Higgins Lisa Rees Sarah Sparrow
TROMBONE	Nigel Howard Charlie Vereker Neil Brownless		
TUBA	Matt Sanders	DOUBLE BASS	Chris Seddon Richard Hodby
TIMPANI & PERCUSSION	Chris Fletcher-Campbell	★ professional musicians	

Total 50 players

NEXT CONCERTS

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 Sunday 9 February 2025 at 4pm at Cornerstone

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

17 Sunday 18 May 2025 at 4pm at Cornerstone

Prokofiev	<i>Symphony no 1 "Classical"</i>
Lyadov	<i>Sorrowful Song</i>
Dvořák	<i>Czech Suite</i>
Larsson	<i>Pastoral Suite</i>
Beethoven	<i>Symphony no 8</i>

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