



Conductor: Geoff Bushell

Leader: Kate Bailey

Honorary President: Lord Vaizey of Didcot

Concert **18** – Sunday 12 October 2025

PROGRAMME

Goldmark The Queen of Sheba: Overture

Karłowicz Eternal Songs

Elgar In the South

Respighi The Pines of Rome



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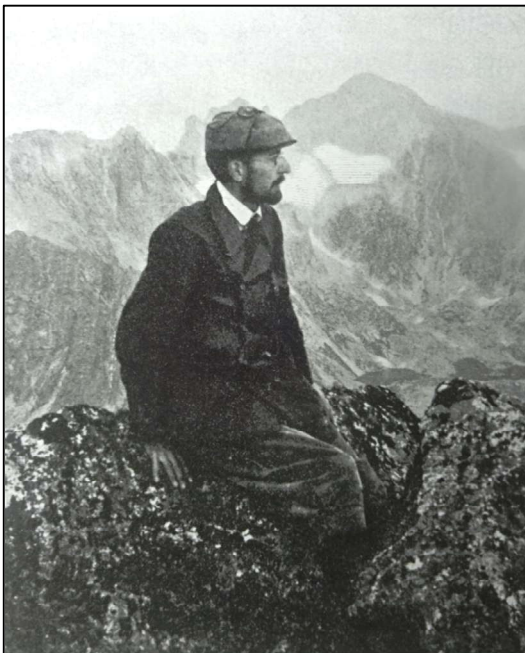
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"When I find myself alone on a steep summit, with only the sky's blue vault above me, and all around the peaks' hardened billows of snow submerged in the sea of the plains – at such times, I begin to dissolve into the vast expanse around me, I no longer feel myself to be a separate individual: I am enveloped by the powerful eternal breath of the universe. The hours spent in that semi-conscious state are like a momentary return to nothingness; they give me peace in the face of life and death, speaking of the eternal harmony of merging into the universe."

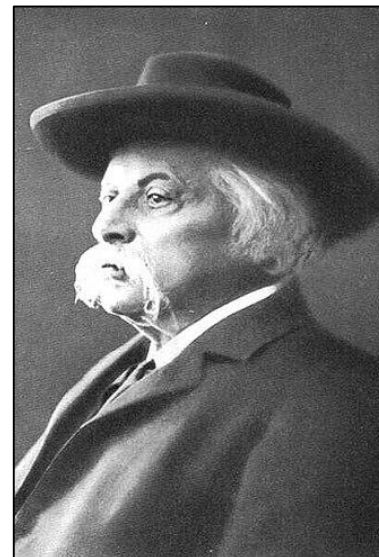
Mieczysław Karłowicz, 1907

"Over the young snow – nine days in the Tatras"

PROGRAMME

The Queen of Sheba: Overture, op 27 Karl Goldmark (1830-1915)

Goldmark came from a large Jewish family. His father Ruben was a cantor to the Jewish congregation at Keszthely, Hungary, where Karl was born. Karl's early training as a violinist was at the musical academy of Sopron (1842–44). He continued his music studies there and two years later was sent by his father to Vienna, where he was able to study violin for some eighteen months before his money ran out. As a composer, he was greatly influenced by Wagner.



Goldmark's opera *The Queen of Sheba* is set in Jerusalem and the surrounding desert in the 10th century. The plot centres on a love triangle between the Queen of Sheba, Assad (an ambassador at the court of Solomon), and Sulamith (Assad's betrothed). The opera was first performed in Vienna in 1875 and was celebrated throughout his life. The overture follows the long operatic tradition of previewing the opera's tuneful main themes.

Eternal Songs, op 10

Mieczysław Karłowicz (1876-1909)

- I Song of Everlasting Yearning
- II Song of Love and Death
- III Song of Eternity

Mieczysław Karłowicz was born in Vishneca, now in Belarus, in 1876. He studied the violin in Warsaw and Berlin, and conducting with Arthur Nikish. He was a great admirer of Tchaikovsky's *Sixth Symphony*, the *Pathétique*, and fell under the influence of Wagner, especially *Tristan and Isolde*. Despite these leanings towards a late-Romantic style of composition, he managed to develop an original musical language and mastered orchestration like few other composers. His output of colourful orchestral music bridges the gap in Polish music between Chopin and Szymanowski. He wrote a symphony, a violin concerto and a string serenade, but his six symphonic poems are the lasting legacy of his small output of only fourteen opus numbers.



Eternal Songs was the second symphonic poem, written between October 1904 and February 1906. The piece reflects the composer's view of the importance of tuneful melody. Though Karłowicz left few clues about the meaning of the titles of each movement, it would seem that they express eternal truths about the meaning of life, and were inspired to some extent by attaining a higher plane of existence outside established norms. It seems the only place Karłowicz could achieve this mystical state was surrounded by the breath-taking scenery of the Tatra Mountains, where he was an avid photographer and skier. In January 1909 he wrote to his publisher with questions about the first performance of *Eternal Songs*, but he was destined never to hear it, as a week later, he died at the age of 32 in an avalanche while skiing on an excursion in the Tatras.

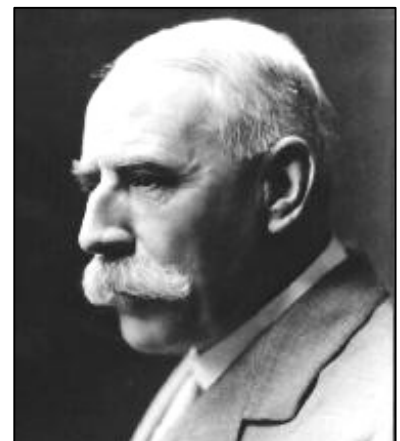
Interval – 20 minutes

Ice cream outside the auditorium + refreshments downstairs

In the South, op 50

Sir Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

Elgar was contemplating writing a symphony, but was not yet convinced he was ready. In 1903, he was exhausted after writing his oratorio *The Apostles*, and decided to take a winter holiday in the warmth of the Mediterranean. The weather was cold and wintry however and he settled in Alassio on the Italian Riviera. There he composed his grandest orchestral work to date – *In the South*, subtitled *Alassio* in the score. Elgar captures the vigour of the Italian sunshine from the outset with a jaunty theme that rises three octaves. After much development, the music subsides into a gentle section in which a solo viola is delicately accompanied by divided violins and harp. The composer later published separately this so-named *Canto Popolare*. Before long, the opening theme returns, cleverly modified and expanded, and leading to a long coda and almost traditional regal ending in what seems like Elgar's favourite key of E flat major. Elgar was struggling for inspiration with his First Symphony at the time, and thought of *In the South* as a concert overture. He later recalled



... in a flash, it all came to me – the conflict of the armies on that very spot long ago, where I now stood – the contrast of the ruin and the shepherd – and then, all of a sudden, I came back to reality. In that time I had composed the overture – the rest was merely writing it down.

At about 20 minutes, it was the composer's longest sustained orchestral piece to date. The first performance of *In the South* was in 1904 – the same year as Elgar's knighthood – at a three day festival at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden.

The Pines of Rome, P.141

Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)

- I – Pines of the Villa Borghese
- II – The Pines Near a Catacomb
- III – The Pines of the Janiculum
- IV – The Pines of the Appian Way



Ottorino Respighi was born in Bologna, Italy to an artistic family. Taught by his father to play the violin and piano, he later took to other instruments, reputedly learning the harp over the course of several days. He was to become fluent in eleven languages. After becoming principal violist of the Russian Imperial Theatre in Saint Petersburg, he there met Rimsky-Korsakov, studying orchestration and composition with him for five months.

In 1913, Respighi left Bologna to become professor of composition at the Liceo Musicale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, a position he held for the rest of his life. Championed by the conductor Toscanini, Respighi's fame as a composer was to spread internationally.

Among Respighi's best known works are his three symphonic poems. *Fountains of Rome* was written in 1916 – it was Respighi's first great success as a composer, somewhat eclipsing his *Sinfonia Drammatica* of 1914 which deserves a wider hearing. *Roman Festivals* is the third of the trilogy, dating from 1928 and depicting scenes of celebration from ancient or modern Rome. In between these, in 1924, came *Pines of Rome* – each movement depicting pine trees at different times of the day.

I – Pines of the Villa Borghese

This movement portrays children playing by the pine trees in the Villa Borghese gardens, dancing the Italian equivalent of the nursery rhyme *Ring a Ring o' Roses* and "mimicking marching soldiers and battles; twittering and shrieking like swallows". The Villa Borghese, a villa located within the grounds, is a monument to the Borghese family, who dominated the city in the early seventeenth century.

II – The Pines Near a Catacomb

The children suddenly disappear and shadows of pine trees that overhang the entrance of a Roman catacomb dominate. It is a majestic dirge, conjuring up the picture of a solitary chapel in deserted open land, with a few pine trees silhouetted against the sky. A hymn is heard – the sound rising and sinking again into a cavern in which the dead are immured. An offstage trumpet plays a hymn. Lower orchestral instruments suggest subterranean catacombs, while the trombones and horns represent priests chanting.

III – The Pines of the Janiculum

Nocturne – the full moon shines on the pines that grow on the hill of the temple of Janus, the double-faced god of doors and gates and of the new year. After extensive piano and clarinet solos, Respighi took the opportunity to have the sound of a nightingale recorded onto a phonograph and requested in the score that it be played at the movement's ending – the first such instance in music.

IV – The Pines of the Appian Way

Respighi now recalls the past glories of the Roman Empire in a representation of dawn on the great military road leading into Rome. The movement portrays pine trees along the misty Appian Way as a triumphant legion advances in the brilliance of a new dawn. At first indistinctly and then incessantly, the rhythm of innumerable steps is heard. Trumpets peal and the consular army advances triumphantly in the grandeur of a newly risen sun towards the Capitoline Hill.

Programme notes by Geoff Bushell

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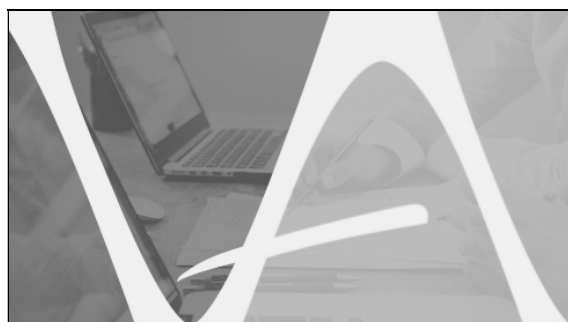
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ABOUT DCO

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 auditioning 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 2018 and programmes three concerts each year 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 music@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 was conductor and musical director of Oxford-based St Giles Orchestra for 40 years from 1983 to 2023, 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 annual charity concerts of Aylesbury Vale Concert Orchestra, 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. Since 2006, Kate has played in the string quartet OXUS, a group which specialises 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 Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*, Beethoven's *Triple Concerto* with her colleagues from The Holywell Ensemble, and in March 2018 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 – 12 OCTOBER 2025

FLUTE	Sue Hurst	VIOLIN 1	Kate Bailey ★
	Rachel Wright		Marisa Miller
+ PICCOLO	Sofia Piccoli		Neil Thomas
			Lily Ip
OBOE	Alan Evans		Rhiannon Parkinson
	Dani McNeil		Eleanor Bagg
COR	Sophie Hebden		Peter Berrisford
ANGLAIS			
		VIOLIN 2	Louise Graham ★
CLARINET	David Little		Joe Andrews
	Jackie Bushell		Gillian Corrigan
BASS	Robert Sales		Lisa Avenell
CLARINET			Pat Field
			Alison Forrow
BASSOON	Will Grainger		Jeanette Thomas
	Bea Waterfield		Catherine Lloyd Evans
CONTRA	Frank Jordan		
BASSOON		VIOLA	Heather Birt ★
			Robert Spencer
HORN	Sean Frankcom		Margarete Lucas
	Paul Willett		Rosie Bruce
	James Seddon		Rhian Frankcom
	Geoff Haines		
		CELLO	Spike Wilson ★
TRUMPET	Thomas James		Polly Silk
	Alison Davidson		Sarah Higgins
	Michael Bird		Andrew Clark Maxwell
			James Wilson
TIMPANI	Cameron Alsop		Sarah Sparrow
PERCUSSION	Jackie Mann	DOUBLE	Chris Seddon
	Liana Warren	BASS	Andrew Tyler
KEYBOARD	Michiyo Machida	★ professional musicians	
HARP	Helen Coad	Total 52 players	

NEXT CONCERTS

19 Sunday 8 February 1 March 2026 at 4pm at Cornerstone

Lyadov	<i>Polonaise in C</i>
Dvořák	<i>American Suite</i>
Sullivan	<i>Di Ballo Overture</i>
Dvořák	<i>Cello Concerto (Joshua Lynch)</i>

20 Sunday 17 May 2026 at 4pm at Cornerstone

Coleridge-Taylor	<i>Petite Suite de Concert</i>
Dvořák	<i>Violin Concerto (Emmanuel Bach)</i>
Bruch	<i>Symphony no 2 in F minor</i>

21 Sunday 11 October 2026 at 4pm at Cornerstone

Alfvén	<i>Swedish Rhapsody no 1 "Midsummer Vigil"</i>
Dukas	<i>Polyeucte Overture</i>
Elgar	<i>Symphony no 1</i>

22 Sunday 7 February 2027 at 4pm at Cornerstone

Borodin	<i>Prince Igor: Overture</i>
Humperdinck	<i>Merchant of Venice: Love Scene</i>
Taneyev	<i>La Oresteia</i>
Glazunov	<i>Symphony no 2</i>

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

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