



"Didcot's new symphony orchestra"

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Conductor: Geoff Bushell
Leader: Kate Bailey
Honorary President: Ed Vaizey, MP

Fifth Concert – Sunday 6 October 2019

PROGRAMME

Rachmaninov	The Rock – Symphonic Fantasia
Wagner	Tannhäuser: Prelude and Venusberg Music (with Didcot Choral Society)
Rimsky-Korsakov	Scheherazade (solo violin: Kate Bailey)

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A message from our Honorary President

"I am delighted that the Didcot Concert Orchestra has been established. Didcot is a vibrant and growing town, and the arts have always been a central part of its life. The concert orchestra fills a gap, and it is very much needed. Music brings great joy to people, and it also plays an important role in our schools and our communities. I wish the Didcot Concert Orchestra every success."

The Right Honourable Edward Vaizey, MP

PROGRAMME

The Rock – Symphonic Fantasia, op 7 ...

... Sergei Rachmaninov (1875-1945)

Rachmaninov greatly revered the composer Tchaikovsky (1840-93), and in a meeting between the two at the home of Rachmaninov's former teacher Sergei Taneyev in 1893, the younger composer was given the opportunity to perform his latest piece at the piano. *The Rock* (more literally translated from the Russian as *The Crag*) was well received by Tchaikovsky. The composer Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov was also present and recounted the event:

"At the close of the evening [Rachmaninov] acquainted us with the newly completed symphonic poem, *The Crag*. The poem pleased all very much, especially Pyotr Ilyich [Tchaikovsky], who was enthusiastic over its colourfulness. The performance of *The Crag* and our discussion of it must have diverted Pyotr Ilyich, for his former good-hearted mood came back to him."

Tchaikovsky asked to be allowed to include *The Rock* in the programme of a forthcoming European concert tour. This was never realised, however, as Tchaikovsky died later that year.

The style of the piece is a fantasia or symphonic poem for orchestra. It is dedicated to Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. As an epigraph for the composition, Rachmaninov chose a couplet from a poem by Russian poet Mikhail Lermontov:

*The golden cloud slept through the night
Upon the breast of the giant-rock*

He later admitted, however, to a second musical storyline, drawn from a story by Anton Chekhov titled *Along the Way*, in which a young girl meets an older man during a stormy, overnight stop at a roadside inn on Christmas Eve. The man shares with her the story of his life, beliefs, and past failures, as a blizzard rages on through the night.

Tannhäuser: Prelude and Venusberg Music ...

... Richard Wagner (1813-1883)

Tannhäuser and the Minnesingers' Contest at Wartburg, an opera in three acts written in 1845, is based on two German legends: Tannhäuser, a legendary medieval German minstrel and poet, and the tale of the song contest at Wartburg – a castle in Thuringia, Germany, in 1207. The story centres on the struggle between sacred and profane love, and redemption through love – a theme running through much of Wagner's mature work.

The original version of the opera consisted of a large scale overture in which the work's basic theme of the conflict between sacred and profane impulses was shown as a progression away from the solemnity of the opening Pilgrims' Hymn into Bacchanalian distractions experienced by Tannhäuser on the Venusberg (a subterranean temple of Venus), before a final triumphant affirmation of the power of religious faith in the return of the Hymn. The first scene of the opera then reverted to the Venusberg. In Wagner's post-*Tristan* revision of the work for a Paris performance in 1861 (as played tonight), Wagner omits the final restatement of the Hymn by merging the Bacchanale into the Venusberg music. Now the Pilgrims' Hymn ceases to provide a framework and becomes the preliminary to a celebration of erotic enchantment and indulgence, featuring siren-like offstage voices – tonight sung by the ladies of Didcot Choral Society, directed by Helen Cliff. Rehearsals have been accompanied by Julian Littlewood.

Didcot Choral Society was founded in 1958, and over half a century later continues to perform a wide range of music throughout the year. It meets on Tuesday evenings at 7.30pm in St Peter's Church, Newlands Avenue, Didcot. There is no audition, the ability to sight read is not a necessity and new members are always welcome. The society is a mixed voice choir of around 70 singers, drawn from Didcot and surrounding towns and villages. It encourages participation in choral singing for all ages and abilities, including those who have never sung in choirs before and many very experienced singers. The choir works closely with other local groups and orchestras, performing a wide range of music throughout the year and is committed to contributing to the musical and cultural life of the area. The choir performs three concerts a year in and around Didcot, and in recent years, the choir has performed several concerts outside Didcot. For further information, please see www.didcotchoralsociety.org.

Interval – 20 minutes – refreshments outside and downstairs

Scheherazade – Symphonic Suite, op 35 ...

... Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908)

- I – The Sea and Sinbad's Ship
- II – The Story of the Kalandar Prince
- III – The Young Prince and Princess
- IV – Festival at Baghdad – The Sea – The Ship Breaks against a Cliff
Surmounted by a Bronze Horseman

Scheherazade is a legendary Persian Queen, and the storyteller of the *One Thousand and One Nights* legend. The story goes that every day the Persian King Shahrya would marry a new virgin, and after doing so would despatch each new bride to be beheaded. Against her father's wishes, Scheherazade volunteered to spend one night with the king. Once in the king's chambers, Scheherazade asked if she might tell the king a story during the long night. The king lay awake and listened with awe as Scheherazade told her first story. The night passed by, and Scheherazade stopped in the middle of the story. The king asked her to finish, but Scheherazade said there was not time, as dawn was breaking. So, the king spared her life for one day to finish the story the next night. The next night, Scheherazade finished the story and then began a second, even more exciting tale which she again stopped halfway through at dawn. So the king again spared her life for another day to finish the second story. Thus the king kept Scheherazade alive day by day, as he eagerly anticipated the finishing of the previous night's story. At the end of 1,000 stories, Scheherazade told the king that she had no more tales to tell him. During these 1,001 nights, the king had fallen in love with Scheherazade, and so he spared her life, and made her his queen.

During the winter of 1887, as he worked to complete Alexander Borodin's unfinished opera *Prince Igor*, Rimsky-Korsakov decided to compose an orchestral piece based on pictures from *One Thousand and One Nights*. During the summer, at the Glinki-Mavriny dacha (a holiday home) in Nyezhhgovitsy on the shores of Cheryemenyetskoye Lake, he finished *Scheherazade* and his *Russian Easter Festival Overture*. The former was completed between 4 June and 7 August 1888.

Scheherazade consists of a symphonic suite of four related movements that form a unified theme. It was written to produce a sensation of fantasy narratives from the Orient. Initially, Rimsky-Korsakov intended to name the respective movements "Prelude, Ballade, Adagio and Finale". However, after weighing the opinions of Anatoly Lyadov and others, as well as his own aversion to a too-definitive

programme, he settled upon thematic headings, based upon the tales from *The Arabian Nights*.

"All I desired was that the hearer, if he liked my piece as symphonic music, should carry away the impression that it is beyond a doubt an Oriental narrative of some numerous and varied fairy-tale wonders and not merely four pieces played one after the other and composed on the basis of themes common to all the four movements."

The reasons for the score's popularity are clear enough – it is a score replete with beguiling orchestral colours, fresh and piquant melodies, with a mild oriental flavour, and a rhythmic vitality largely absent from many major orchestral works of the later 19th century. Although each section of the movement is highly individual, Rimsky's masterful orchestration unifies it and provides the basis of themes and variations in the other movements. The score opens with a grim descending tonality (E-D-C-B flat) which is soon followed by woodwind chords reminiscent of Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Soon we hear the short recurring musical phrase that represents Scheherazade herself – a tender, sensuously winding melody for violin solo accompanied by harp.

The scherzo is placed second, and features fanfare passages for solo trombone and trumpet. The famous third movement is slow and passionate, but with a final quick coda. The finale uses much of the material heard previously, albeit with some new ideas, including a variation on the fanfare theme to represent a shipwreck. Coherence is maintained by the ordered repetition of melodies, and continues the impression of an integrated symphonic suite, rather than of separate movements. A final tonic major version of the Scheherazade theme resolves in a fantastic, lyrical, and ultimately peaceful conclusion.

In this performance, the solo violin part is played by DCO's Leader, Kate Bailey.

Programme notes by Geoff Bushell

DCO WOULD LIKE TO THANK...

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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 symphony orchestra and become a cultural destination for classical music. This would enable audiences in the Didcot area 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 new 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. Programmes for the orchestra's upcoming concerts can be seen on page 12 and at DCO's website at www.didcotconcertorchestra.org.uk.

Sponsorship

DCO is a not-for-profit charitable unincorporated association, underwritten by the founders. The orchestra welcomes offers of sponsorship from businesses, organisations and philanthropic individuals who are keen to support the development of performing arts in south Oxfordshire. If interested in sponsoring 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 studied conducting with George Hurst, Denise Ham, Michael Rose and Adrian Leaper. As conductor and musical director of Oxford-based St Giles Orchestra since 1983, Geoff has developed its technical and musical capabilities and conducted concerts in partnership with local choirs, for example in the performance of Orff's *Carmina Burana* and Verdi's *Requiem* in Oxford Town Hall, and recordings including Walton's *Crown Imperial March* which was broadcast on the BBC One Show. On 27 April 2019, Geoff made his conducting debut at Oxford's Sheldonian Theatre in Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* with a 70-strong St Giles Orchestra, 150 singers from Wantage Choral Society and South Chiltern Society, and three young professional soloists. Geoff also regularly rehearses Abingdon Symphony Orchestra and Phoenix Flutes. Renowned for introducing players and audiences alike to lesser-known and unjustly neglected romantic repertoire, he has also earned a reputation as a composer of romantic-style pieces, including four commissions from the Abingdon and District Musical Society to celebrate their successive tenth anniversaries. Geoff is also well known locally as a player of French horn and double bass.

OXUS

DCO's four string section leaders, Kate Bailey, Louise Graham, Heather Birt and Spike Wilson, 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. They frequently work 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*.

LEADER

Kate Bailey 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. When she is not doing something musical, she enjoys photography, writing and trying to learn Turkish.

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.

PERFORMERS – 6 OCTOBER 2019

FLUTE + piccolo + piccolo	Sue Hurst Kate Geary Kate Roberts	VIOLIN 1	Kate Bailey * Misha Brazier Tope Caroline Churchill Ruth Harper Raoul Trines Andrew Frawley Catherine Gough Gillian Corrigan
OBOE + cor anglais	Lorna Rennie Rachel Burbidge		
CLARINET	Barbara Stuart Jackie Bushell		
BASSOON	Will Grainger Jonathan Ross	VIOLIN 2	Louise Graham * Eleanor Bagg Felicity Fratter- Davies Noreen Tyson Jeanette Thomas Pat Field Mandy van Kempen
HORN	Sam Dunwoody Rob Bentall Steve Guard Joel Allred		
TRUMPET	Thomas James Alex Elderfield	VIOLA	Heather Birt * Jane Anderson Gill Barbour Katherine Baker
TROMBONE	Nigel Howard Charles Vereker Stephanie Howard		
TUBA	Matt Sanders	CELLO	Spike Wilson * Polly Silk Andrew Rendell Lisa Rees Philippa Simon
TIMPANI	Chris Fletcher- Campbell		
PERCUSSION	Dave Martin Sue Woolhouse	DOUBLE BASS	Richard Hodby John Mears
HARP	Helen Coad		

* professional string section leaders

Didcot Choral Society

SOPRANO

Helen Cliff (director)
Kate Andrews
Margaret Gallop
Alison Lane

Tara Mahon
Maria Morris
Paula Tayler

ALTO

Alison Loader
Karen Roberts
Gill Suter
Lisa Yeung-Donaldson

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NEXT CONCERTS

6 Sunday 8 March 2020 at 4pm at Cornerstone

Butterworth
Suk
Franck

A Shropshire Lad
Fairy Tale – suite for large orchestra
Symphony in D minor

7 Sunday 21 June 2020 at 4pm at Cornerstone

Prokofiev
Liadov
Dvořák
Larsson
Beethoven

Symphony no 1 "Classical"
Nénie – Sorrowful Song
Czech Suite
Pastoral Suite
Symphony no 8 in F

8 Sunday 4 October 2020 at 4pm at Cornerstone

Khachaturian
Miaskovsky
Mussorgsky orch. Ravel

Adagio from Spartacus and Phrygia
Symphony no 27 in C minor
Pictures at an Exhibition

9 Sunday 14 March 2021 at 4pm at Cornerstone

Wagner
D'Indy
Wagner
Richard Strauss

Parsifal: Prelude
Summer Day in the Mountains
Parsifal: Good Friday Music
Four Last Songs (Mary Pope, soprano)

10 Sunday 10 June 2021 at 4pm at Cornerstone

Franck
Fauré
Vaughan Williams
Debussy
Brahms

Les Éolides
Pélleas et Mélisande
The Wasps Overture
Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune
Serenade no 1 in D

11 Sunday 3 October 2021 at 4pm at Cornerstone

Saint Saëns
Howard Hanson
Goldmark
Tchaikovsky

Phaéton
Symphony no 2 "Romantic"
Sakuntala Overture
Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture

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