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

Concert **6** – Sunday 8 March 2020

PROGRAMME

Butterworth	Rhapsody – A Shropshire Lad
Suk	Fairy Tale – Suite for Large Orchestra
Franck	Symphony in D minor

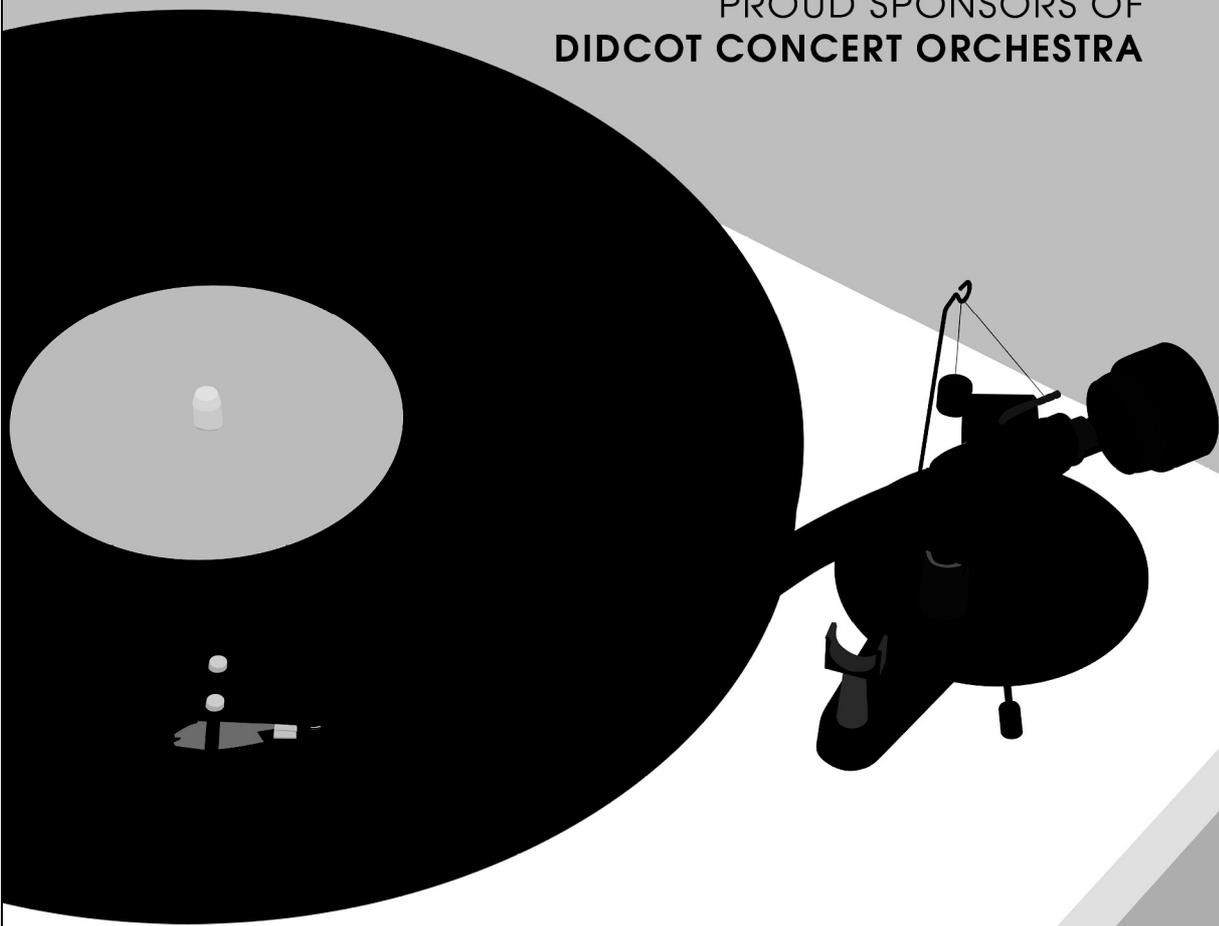


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A message from our Honorary President

"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."

Ed Vaizey, formerly MP for Wantage and Didcot

PROGRAMME

A Shropshire Lad

George Butterworth (1885-1916)

George Butterworth was one of a number of promising composers who gave their lives at a young age in World War 1. Butterworth's life was cut short on the Somme in 1916, and there is a memorial to him where he taught at nearby Radley College.

In 1896, the English poet AE Housman published a collection of 63 poems, which became very popular for composers to set. Butterworth set several of these, and then in 1913 completed an orchestral rhapsody, which he first called *The Land of Lost Content*, then *The Cherry Tree*, before settling on the name *A Shropshire Lad*. The mood of Butterworth's piece is very nostalgic, and it is as much about the men of Shropshire about to go to war, as it is an evocation of Shropshire countryside.

Fairy Tale, op 16

Josef Suk (1874-1935)

I – About the constant love of Radúz and Mahulena and their trials

II – Intermezzo: Folk Dance: The game of swans and peacocks

III – Intermezzo: Funeral Music

IV – Runa's curse and how it was overcome by true love

Born in Křečovice, Bohemia, Josef Suk learned the organ, violin and piano from his father, but his greatest inspiration was to come later from his teacher Antonín Dvořák. Encouraged also by Brahms and embracing the innovative influences of Debussy, Mahler and Richard Strauss, Suk ranked among the most important composers of the Czech Romantic school. Dvořák had great respect for Suk, reflected in Suk's 1898 marriage to Dvořák's daughter, Otilie. For six years, Suk continued to write in a mostly tonal and late-Romantic style, but during the composition of the symphonic poem *Prague* (op 26), his mentor and father-in-law Dvořák died, followed within 14 months by his wife Otilie at the age of only 27. Suk

never completely recovered from this double tragedy, and his next work, a giant funeral ode titled *Asrael Symphony* (op 27) was named after the angel of death and is an hour-long outpouring of his pain and grief, and questioning of the value of life. This piece was supplemented in later years by two further major choral and orchestral works in similar style – *Ripening* (op 34) and *Epilog* (op 37).

Suk's *Fairy Tale* (op 16) (*Pohádka*) is from a happier period. This orchestral suite is derived from incidental music Suk wrote in 1898 (op 13) for a theatre piece titled *Radúz and Mahulena* by Czech poet Julius Zeyer (1841-1901). The magical story is based on an old Eastern European legend of the romance of a dashing young prince, Radúz, who desires the hand of Princess Mahulena from a rival mountain kingdom. However, before they can achieve eternal happiness, the would-be lovers must endure certain rites of passage demanded by sorceress Queen Runa.

The piece, subtitled *Suite for large orchestra*, begins with a radiant portrait of the love of Radúz and Mahulena. As in Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*, a solo violin offers a love song without words. The second movement, *The game of swans and peacocks*, features folk-like tunes and countryside hues, quite reminiscent of Dvořák's *Slavonic Dances* and the music of Smetana. The death of the King is portrayed in the third movement, *Funeral Music*, by the symbolism of eternal swans. Suk provides a rhapsodic finale entitled *Runa's curse and how it was overcome by true love*. Here, in the play, Runa has turned Mahulena into a poplar tree, and while wandering aimlessly in the woods, Prince Radúz fortuitously discovers the tree, and they are united at last. After a series of colourful reminiscences of earlier music, the power of Runa's curse diminishes, and the love aria from the first movement is restated by the solo violin as the curtain closes. Years later, in *Asrael*, this music returns as the motif of lost love and death to lament Otilie's passing.

Interval – 20 minutes – refreshments outside and downstairs

Symphony in D minor

César Franck (1822-1890)

- I – Lento – Allegro ma non troppo
- II – Allegretto
- III – Allegro non troppo

Born in Liège (then part of the Netherlands, now in Belgium) in 1822, César Auguste Jean Guillaume Franck showed early promise in drawing and musical skills. His father Nicolas-Joseph Franck, a bank clerk, was keen for César to become a young prodigy pianist-composer, emulating Franz Liszt, and thus bring fame and fortune to his family. Nicolas-Josef entered César at the Royal Conservatory of Liège, where César gave concerts, one in front of King Leopold I of the newly-formed kingdom of Belgium. In 1835, his father resolved that the time

had come for wider audiences, so brought César and his younger brother Joseph to Paris, to study privately at the Paris Conservatoire. Soon César began giving public concerts of his own chamber music, and teaching, culminating in the 1845 premiere of his oratorio *Ruth*. Though *Ruth* was subsequently revised, it was not performed again until 1872. Franck took badly the initial criticism of his work, and this led him to retire from public life. Although when at the Conservatoire he had never shone as an organist, he was in 1846 to become the *titulaire* (primary organist) at a small church which possessed a fine new organ by Aristide Cavallé-Coll, who was making his name as an innovative creator of magnificent new organs with a unique orchestral sound. Rising to be the *titulaire* at increasingly important churches, Frank was later to collaborate with Cavallé-Coll in designing new instruments and giving their opening recital. His compositions didn't really achieve fame until his *String Quartet* was performed at the age of 68. Only a month later, he was knocked down by an omnibus (uncannily mirroring composer Ernest Chausson's untimely death in a cycling accident), and died shortly afterwards.

Though writing a trickle of new compositions in later life, it was not until 1888, at age 66, that Franck wrote his only symphony. The work is in cyclical form, its themes often repeated in different keys and with subtle variation. Throughout, the typically French addition of a pair of cornets adds sweeter melodic and accompaniment options to the brass ensemble. The first movement has a slow beginning, whose theme in the cellos and basses recurs frequently, and these sections are interspersed with livelier orchestral *tuttis*. The second movement in triple time introduces the harp with string pizzicatos, while the cor anglais is given the main theme. The finale is vigorous, but its tempo is cunningly calculated to facilitate a reprise of the cor anglais theme from the previous movement. There is a triumphant restatement of this theme before the symphony ends in jubilation.

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 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, 130 singers from Wantage Choral Society and South Chiltern Society, and three young professional soloists. Geoff also regularly conducts Abingdon Symphony Orchestra. Renowned for introducing players and audiences alike to lesser-known and unjustly neglected romantic repertoire, he also composes romantic-style pieces, including four commissions from the Abingdon and District Musical Society to celebrate successive anniversaries. Geoff is also well known locally as a player of French horn. In October 2019, Geoff was awarded the Didcot Town Council Artistic Award, marking over 30 concerts conducted in Didcot and the joint founding with his wife Jackie of Didcot Concert Orchestra.

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

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.



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PERFORMERS – 8 MARCH 2020

FLUTE	Sue Hurst Kate Geary	HARP	Helen Coad
OBOE	Alan Evans Lorna Rennie	VIOLIN 1	Kate Bailey * Caroline Churchill Misha Brazier Tope Cathie Ng Eleanor Bagg Gillian Corrigan
COR ANGLAIS	Jo Bell		
CLARINET	Lisa Walker Jackie Bushell	VIOLIN 2	Louise Graham * Rosie Bruce Jennifer Robinson Alison Forrow Pat Field
BASS CLARINET	Barbara Stuart		
BASSOON	Will Grainger Jonathan Ross		
HORN	Sam Dunwoody Joel Allred Geoff Haines Paul Willett	VIOLA	Heather Birt * Gill Barbour Catherine Coldstream Margarete Lucas Katherine Baker Georgia Davies
TRUMPET	Thomas James Alex Elderfield	CELLO	Spike Wilson * Philippa Simon Polly Silk Lisa Rees Sarah Sparrow Tom Adams
CORNET	Matt McDonald Jeremy Wood		
TROMBONE	Nigel Howard Charles Vereker Stephanie Howard	DOUBLE BASS	Richard Hodby Chris Seddon
TUBA	Matt Sanders		
TIMPANI	Roger Griffin		
PERCUSSION	Sue Woolhouse Barbara Stuart Helen Coad		

* professional string section leaders

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NEXT CONCERTS

7 Sunday 21 June 2020 at 4pm at Cornerstone

Prokofiev	Symphony no 1 "Classical"
Liadov	Nénie – Sorrowful Song
Dvořák	Czech Suite
Larsson	Pastoral Suite
Beethoven	Symphony no 8 in F

8 Sunday 4 October 2020 at 4pm at Cornerstone

Khachaturian	Adagio from Spartacus and Phrygia
Myaskovsky	Symphony no 27 in C minor
Mussorgsky orch. Ravel	Pictures at an Exhibition

9 Sunday 28 February 2021 **NEW DATE** at 4pm at Cornerstone

Wagner	Parsifal: Prelude
Richard Strauss	Four Last Songs (Mary Pope, soprano)
Dvořák	Hussite Overture
Tchaikovsky	Sleeping Beauty: ballet highlights

10 Sunday 23 May 2021 **NEW DATE** at 4pm at Cornerstone

Franck	Les Éolides
Fauré	Pélleas et Mélisande
Vaughan Williams	The Wasps Overture
Debussy	Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune
Brahms	Serenade no 1 in D

11 Sunday 3 October 2021 at 4pm at Cornerstone

Saint Saëns	Phaéton
Howard Hanson	Symphony no 2 "Romantic"
Goldmark	Sakuntala Overture
Tchaikovsky	Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture

12 Sunday 6 February 2022 at 4pm at Cornerstone

Johann Strauss II	Gypsy Baron: Overture
Glazunov	Violin Concerto (Clare Howick)
Reznicek	Nachtstück (Clare Howick)
Dvořák	Symphony no 5 in F

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