



Conductor: Geoff Bushell

Leader: Kate Bailey

Honorary President: Lord Vaizey of Didcot

Concert **16** – Sunday 9 February 2025

PROGRAMME

Tchaikovsky	The Nutcracker Suite
Hadley	The Ocean
Dvořák	The Noon Witch
Suk	Prague, Symphonic Poem



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Taylor Wimpey

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PROGRAMME

The Nutcracker Suite, op 71a

Peter Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

- I – Miniature Overture
- II – March
- III – Dance of the Sugar-Plum Fairy
- IV – Russian Dance (Trepak)
- V – Arabian Dance (coffee)
- VI – Chinese Dance (tea)
- VII – Dance of the Reed Flutes (Mirlitons)
- VIII – Waltz of the Flowers



The Nutcracker, opus 71, is a two-act classical ballet, set on Christmas Eve at the foot of a Christmas tree in a child's imagination featuring a Nutcracker doll. The plot is an adaptation of Alexandre Dumas' 1844 short story *The Nutcracker*, itself a retelling of E.T.A. Hoffmann's 1816 short story *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*. *The Nutcracker* is the last of Tchaikovsky's three ballets, and was first choreographed by Marius Petipa in St Petersburg in 1892. Immortalised by Disney's film *Fantasia* in 1940, the ballet and its eight-movement suite have remained popular to this day.

The Nutcracker tells the story of Clara and the magical nutcracker doll given to her as a Christmas gift from her godfather, Drosselmeyer. On Christmas Eve, the nutcracker comes to life and fights the Mouse King. The nutcracker transforms into a prince and takes Clara to the Land of Sweets, where they see many dances from around the world – and the Sugar Plum Fairy dances with the prince.

The Ocean, op 99

Henry Hadley (1871-1937)

Henry Kimball Hadley was an American composer and conductor. Born into a musical family, he studied composition with the prominent New England composer George Whitefield Chadwick. After a brief career as a touring opera company violinist, in 1894 he travelled to Vienna to further his studies, and occasionally encountered Johannes Brahms in cafés. He heard Tchaikovsky's *Sixth Symphony* while there, which made a strong impact on him. He returned to the USA in 1896 and took a position as the music instructor at a boys' school on Long Island, New York, and there wrote the first two of his



four symphonies. After persuading prominent conductors such as Walter Damrosch, Victor Herbert and John Philip Sousa to premiere his works, he made his own conducting premiere at Manhattan's Waldorf Astoria Hotel in 1900. Realising that American orchestras preferred European conductors, and presumably vice versa, he returned to Europe, where he was to meet Richard Strauss. Hadley composed an opera entitled *Salome*, not realising that Strauss was also writing an opera with the same name. Hadley's *Salome* was eventually performed in nineteen European cities, and he conducted it, along with his newly finished *Third Symphony*, with the Berlin Philharmonic in 1907. Returning to the USA later that year, Hadley became the first conductor of the San Francisco Symphony, and was invited to become Associate Conductor of the New York Philharmonic. Along with an opus list numbering 140, his crowning achievement was the creation of the Berkshire Music Festival at Tanglewood in 1934. In 1921, he composed the last of his five symphonic poems, entitled *The Ocean*. Inspired by the poem *Ocean Ode* by Louis K Anspacher, this depicts the changing moods of the ocean – at first representing the tumultuous sea, a calmer central section depicting 'sea-sprites' (3 flutes) and finally, in Hadley's own words "the quiet, serene ocean flowing on through eternity".

Tear a leaf from the Furies' history, Loosen the wind's hoarse blast. Unroll the scroll of stormy mystery. Over the ocean's vast!

...

Naiads bound in graceful slumber. Lie within the dark green caves; Where the flush of slipping waves. Scarce disturbs the shadowy umber.

...

The dreaming moon-light silvers all. In the eve serene; And the rolling rise and fall. Of the waves, careen, Rhythmical and gradual, Mesmerically musical, Hold the sea in silent thrall.

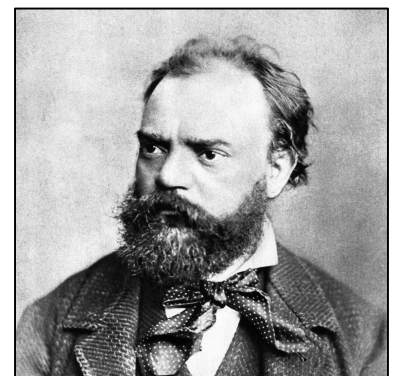
Interval – 20 minutes

Ice cream outside the auditorium, refreshments downstairs

The Noon Witch, op 108

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

It was only in later life that Dvořák explored more fully the sound-world of the symphonic poem, referring to some of them as overtures. Before his voyage to the USA, he had written a trio of overtures with the theme "Nature, Life and Love". These were *In Nature's Realm*, op 91, *Carnival*, op 92, and *Othello* op 93 – intended to be played together like a symphony, but invariably these days played separately to begin concerts. In 1896-1897, after returning to his native Bohemia from the USA, Dvořák wrote five



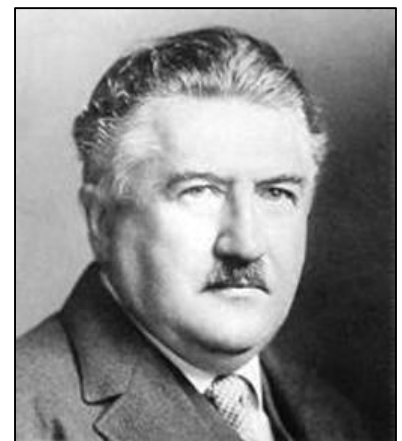
symphonic poems, with sequential opus numbers – *The Water Goblin*, op 107, *The Noon Witch*, op 108, *The Golden Spinning Wheel*, op 109, *The Wild Dove*, op 110 and *A Hero's Song*, op 111. The first four poems are based upon ballads from the collection *Kytice* ("Bouquet") by the Czech folklorist Karel Jaromír Erben. *A Hero's Song* is based on a programme of Dvořák's devising and is believed to be autobiographical.

The poem *The Noon Witch* (in Czech: *Polednice*) is based on the noon demon "Lady Midday" (Poludnitsa) of Slavic mythology. Opening with a scene of domestic happiness, a mother is preparing dinner for her husband's return from work, but her young child is getting increasingly fractious (repeated notes on a solo oboe). She warns her son that if he does not behave, she will summon the Noon Witch to take him away. He does not behave, and the witch – described as "small, brown, wild of feature, with a sheet drawn over her head" – arrives at the stroke of noon and demands the child (an eerie bass clarinet portrays her creeping in). The mother, terrified that the witch has actually come, grabs her son, and there follows a bizarre scherzo in which the witch dances around her victim, to the increasing concern of the mother. The mother faints, grasping her child. Later that day, the father walks slowly home (represented by a new jaunty theme), and finds his wife passed out with their son in her arms. He manages to revive his wife, but they find that she has accidentally smothered their son while protecting him from the witch. The story ends with a vivid symphonic depiction of the parents' anguished outpouring of grief.

Praga, Symphonic Poem, op 26

Josef Suk (1874-1935)

Josef Suk was pupil and son-in-law of Antonin Dvořák. He was second violinist in the renowned Czech Quartet for 40 years, and later in life taught composition at the Prague Conservatory. The symphonic poem *Praga* originated out of the emotions he experienced in the spring of 1904 on a concert tour of the Czech Quartet through Spain. In a sudden mood of longing and strong homesickness for the homeland he conceived of the idea of paying homage to Bohemia's metropolis in a symphonic poem which would express love of this beloved city, love for its stormy past and presentiment of its glorious future.



A trip to Prague for Dvořák's funeral on 1 May 1904 hastened the composition – which includes a homage quotation from Dvorak's *Cello Concerto* – and by 1 October it was finished. Except for the opening theme (on low horns), the entire work was written in Bohemia. Suk wrote "it originated out of enthusiasm to its very end, in which I wished to express the superiority of Prague above everything else".

The opening horn theme denotes misty distant images of Prague, in a theme connected to the Hussite chorale "You Who Are God's Fighters". Travelling via twists and turns of emotion, the 25-minute piece ends jubilantly. The first performance was given on 18 December 1904.

As if the shock of the death of his father-in-law had not been enough, a year later Suk suffered the body-blow of the death of his wife Otylka (Dvořák's daughter) at the age of only 27. The double tragedy was to affect him deeply for the rest of his life. His next work, the *Asrael Symphony*, op 27, turned out to be a funereal outpouring of interminable grief (Asrael is the Biblical Angel of Death). Suk's future compositional style was instantly transformed into something much more disturbed and discordant, leaving *Praga* as the last work of the true original and happier Suk.

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 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 early 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. 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 – 9 FEBRUARY 2025

FLUTE	Sue Hurst Rachel Wright	VIOLIN 1	Kate Bailey ★ Marisa Miller
PICCOLO	Sofia Piccoli		Rhiannon Parkinson Eleanor Bagg
OBOE	Alan Evans Dani McNeil		Cathy Ng Andrew Frawley
COR ANGLAIS	Sophie Hebden		Mhairi Robertson
CLARINET	Lisa Walker Jackie Bushell	VIOLIN 2	Louise Graham ★ Rosie Bruce
BASS CLARINET	Robert Sales		Jeanette Thomas Herbie Frankcom
BASSOON + CONTRA	Bea Waterfield Chris Grovenor		Alison Forrow Pat Field Liz Lochhead
HORN	Sean Frankcom Paul Willett James Seddon Brian O'Rourke	VIOLA	Heather Birt ★ Louise Hill Margarete Lucas Rhian Frankcom Robert Spencer
TRUMPET	Michael Bird Philip Dobbie Jeremy Wood	CELLO	Spike Wilson ★ James Wilson Polly Silk Andrew Clark Maxwell Lisa Rees
TROMBONE	Nigel Howard Becky Maglone Stephanie Howard	DOUBLE BASS	Chris Seddon Andrew Tyler
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NEXT CONCERTS

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>

18 Sunday 12 October 2025 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>

19 Sunday 8 February 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>

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