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Conductor: Geoff Bushell

Leader: Kate Bailey

Honorary President: Lord Vaizey of Didcot

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Concert **17** – Sunday 18 May 2025

## PROGRAMME

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

In memory of benefactor Eleanor Hards

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# PROGRAMME

The music in our last concert was made up of pieces which described places (like Prague), or fairy tales (like Nutcracker), or stories (such as the Noon Witch). Such pieces were common in the Romantic era of composition popular between 1820 and 1900. The music of the earlier Classical era – 1730 to 1820 – was less programmatic. At this time, orchestras were smaller than nowadays, and did not routinely feature trombones, tuba, piccolo, cor anglais, bass clarinet or contrabassoon, and often used only two horns.

Classical era music was known for its clarity and regularity of structure, with balanced four or eight-bar phrases, and relatively conventional harmonic and rhythmic language. A key feature of this period is a musical structure known as "sonata form". At its simplest, sonata form is made up of three sections: exposition, development, and recapitulation. The first of these presents the main theme or themes of the piece. In the development section, a musical idea is transformed and restated, often in keys distant from the initial or "home" key. The home key returns for the recapitulation of the initial musical themes, sometimes including a short coda.

This afternoon's programme, originally scheduled in 2020, explores the Classical period, and (enigmatically) begins with a piece written long after the Classical period, but paying homage to it.

## Symphony no 1 "Classical", op 25

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

- I – Allegro
- II – Larghetto
- III – Gavotte: Non troppo allegro
- IV – Finale: Molto vivace



The Symphony no 1 in D major, also known as the "Classical", was Prokofiev's first numbered symphony. He began to compose it in 1916 and completed it in September 1917. It was composed as a modern reinterpretation of the classical style of Haydn and Mozart, but doesn't follow this format exactly, so is often called "neo-classical". One striking difference is the technical demands made of the players. Strings are required to play extremely fast notes, often joined by the flutes, who have repeated "top Ds" well above the recognised upper register of the instrument – and requiring months of practice before a performance. Perhaps the style of the symphony is best described in Prokofiev's own words:

*"When our classically-inclined musicians and professors (to my mind faux-classical) hear this symphony, they will be bound to scream in protest at this*

*new example of Prokofiev's insolence, look how he will not let Mozart lie quiet in his grave but must come prodding at him with his grubby hands, contaminating the pure classical pearls with horrible Prokofievish dissonances. But my true friends will see that the style of my symphony is precisely Mozartian classicism and will value it accordingly, while the public will no doubt just be content to hear happy and uncomplicated music which it will, of course, applaud."*

## Nénie – Sorrowful Song, op 67

Anatol Lyadov (1855-1914)

At a time when his fellow Russian contemporaries were composing operas, symphonies and concertos, Lyadov concentrated on producing a remarkable collection of wonderfully scored and evocative orchestral miniatures. His last published work, *Sorrowful Song* is the first movement of his fourth suite *Scenes From Maeterlinck*. Shortly before the composer's death, Belyayev offered to have his publishing firm in Leipzig bring out an edition of the score for this single movement (the composers' favorite of the set), so Lyadov changed the title from *From Maeterlinck* – *A Female Figure* to *Sorrowful Song*. The German editors added *Naenie* (*Nénie* in French), as the subject recalled Friedrich Schiller's poem *Nänie* (set by Brahms in 1881). *Nenia* was an ancient funeral deity in Rome and the Roman poet Lucretius describes *neniæ* as funeral laments. Under this new title, the work was chosen for concerts memorializing Lyadov in Moscow (25 October 1914, directed by Rachmaninov) and in St. Petersburg (15 November 1914, directed by Nikolai Malko). The mood is certainly of a lament, but with an enthralling beauty.



## Czech Suite, op 39

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

- I – Preludium (Pastorale)
- II – Polka
- III – Sousedská (Minuet)
- IV – Romance
- V – Finale (Furiant)

The *Czech Suite* was written when Dvořák's fame as a composer was burgeoning, and the popularity of nationalist music growing. Liszt had had great success with his Hungarian rhapsodies, and then Brahms with 21 Hungarian dances, and Dvořák with 16 Slavonic dances.



The *Czech Suite* was published soon after, its five movements alternating traditional Czech dances and scenes of the Bohemian countryside. In its lyricism, vitality, rich melodic invention and formal clarity – it's one of Dvořák's most characteristic works.

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Interval – 20 minutes

Ice cream outside the auditorium + refreshments downstairs

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## Pastoral Suite, op 19

Lars-Erik Larsson (1908-1986)

- I – Andante tranquillo (recreation)
- II – Overture
- III – Romance
- IV – Scherzo

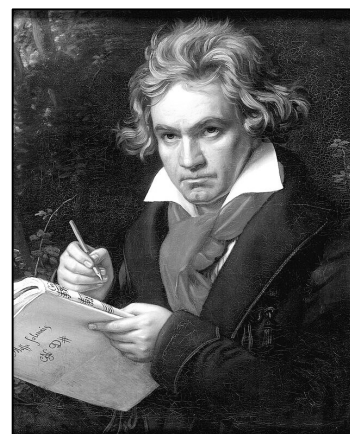


Lars-Erik Vilner Larsson was a Swedish composer, conductor, radio producer, and educator. He wrote popular works in Swedish art music: *A Winter's Tale* (*En vintersaga*; 1937–1938), the *Pastoral Suite* (*Pastoralsvit*; 1938), and *God in Disguise* (*Förklädd gud*; 1940), as well as three symphonies, and numerous concerto works. In 1937, the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation – the country's national, publicly-funded radio – employed Larsson as a composer-in-residence to write music to accompany radio programs. After the success of *A Winter's Tale*, he was commissioned to write a second lyrical suite – *The Hours of the Day*. He contributed six movements to accompany six poems by Swedish authors. After the first performance on 11 October 1938, with Larsson conducting the Radio Entertainment Orchestra in Stockholm, three of the movements faded into obscurity, and Larsson excerpted the remaining three as the *Pastoral Suite*. Geoff Bushell has recreated one of the rejected but delightful movements from a recording. Despite the composer's birth date about 30 years later than the late-Romantic compositional style would suggest, each movement is light, witty and tuneful.

## Symphony no 8 in F, op 93

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

- I – Allegro vivace e con brio
- II – Allegretto scherzando quasi andante
- III – Tempo di menuetto
- IV – Allegro vivace



Beethoven's *Eighth Symphony* was begun in the summer of 1812, immediately after the completion of the *Seventh Symphony*, and took only four months to complete. The premiere took place on 27 February 1814, at a concert in the Redoutensaal, Vienna, at which the *Seventh Symphony* (which had been premiered two months earlier) was also played. To distinguish the Eighth from the earlier Sixth "*Pastoral*" in the same key of F major, Beethoven often referred to it as "my little symphony in F".

Using sonata form, the first movement is in the home key of F major and is in a fast 3/4 time. Unusually for Beethoven's works, it reaches its dramatic climax not during the development section, but at the onset of the recapitulation – this is marked *fortississimo* – a marking the composer rarely used. The second movement appears to be a rhythmic parody of Haydn's *Symphony 101 "The Clock"*, opening with even staccato chords. The third movement is not particularly close to its 18<sup>th</sup>-century predecessors, as it has a rather coarse thumping rhythm. The movement's central minuet section has prized solos for horns and clarinet. The finale is the most substantial movement, with a fast tempo. In the concluding Coda, Beethoven uses a loud and startling C#, in an abortive attempt to modulate to a remote key, but a few bars later, the new F# minor is mercifully resolved back to the home key of F major. The symphony ends with a very long passage of loud tonic harmony. Tchaikovsky called this movement "One of the greatest symphonic masterpieces of Beethoven."

*Programme notes by Geoff Bushell*

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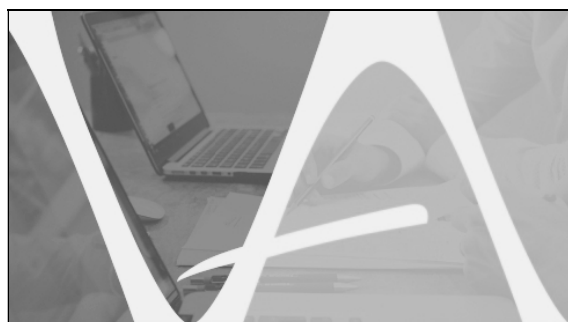
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# ABOUT DCO

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 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](http://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](mailto: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](http://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*.

## DCO WOULD LIKE TO THANK...

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# PERFORMERS – 18 MAY 2025

FLUTE	Sue Hurst Kate Geary	VIOLIN 1	Kate Bailey ★ Marisa Miller Caroline Churchill Misha Brazier Tope Neil Thomas Matthew Madeley Rhiannon Parkinson
OBOE	Alan Evans Dani McNeil		
CLARINET	Lisa Walker Jackie Bushell		
BASSOON	Bea Waterfield Chris Grovenor	VIOLIN 2	Louise Graham ★ Rosie Bruce Jeanette Thomas Eleanor Bagg Herbie Frankcom Alison Forrow Ruth Harper Gillian Corrigan
HORN	Sean Frankcom James Seddon		
TRUMPET	Thomas James Emily Vaughan-Williams		
TIMPANI	Chris Fletcher-Campbell	VIOLA	Heather Birt ★ Rhian Frankcom Robert Spencer Louise Hill
		CELLO	Spike Wilson ★ Polly Silk Sarah Higgins Andrew Clark Maxwell Lisa Rees Sarah Sparrow
		DOUBLE BASS	Chris Seddon Andrew Tyler

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# NEXT CONCERTS

## 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>

## 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>

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