



Conductor: Geoff Bushell

Leader: Kate Bailey

Honorary President: Lord Vaizey of Didcot

Concert **19** – Sunday 1 March 2026

PROGRAMME

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



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PROGRAMME

Polonaise in C, op 49

Anatoly Lyadov (1855-1914)

Lyadov was born in 1855 in St. Petersburg, Russian Empire, into a family of eminent Russian musicians. He was taught informally by his conductor step-father Konstantin Lyadov from 1860 to 1868, and then in 1870 entered the Saint Petersburg Conservatory to study piano and violin. He taught at the conservatory from 1878, with pupils including Sergei Prokofiev and Nikolai Myaskovsky. Excluding his many piano pieces, his published compositions are relatively few due to a certain self-critical lack of confidence. Like many of his contemporaries, Lyadov was drawn to intensely Russian subjects. Much of his music is programmatic; for example his tone poems *Baba Yaga*, *Kikimora* and *The Enchanted Lake*.



In complete contrast to Lyadov's last piece *Nénie – Sorrowful Song*, op 67, which DCO performed in May 2025, the effervescent *Polonaise in C* was written for the celebrations of the centenary in 1899 of the birth of Alexander Pushkin.

American Suite, op 98b

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

- I – Andante con moto
- II – Allegro
- III – Moderato (alla polacca)
- IV – Andante
- V – Allegro

Dvořák initially wrote a *Suite in A major* for piano, opus 98, in New York between 19 February and 1 March 1894. He orchestrated it in two parts more than a year after his return to the United States and immediately before his departure for Europe. The piano version was performed soon after its composition, but the orchestral version was not played in concert until 1910 and not published until 1911, seven years after Dvořák's death in 1904. As is often the case with Dvořák, the orchestral version gives the work a new breadth. Each movement has a marked rhythm. The cyclic aspects of Dvořák's composition are apparent in that the main theme of the first movement recurs during the conclusion of the work. It is difficult to determine whether this theme comes from the typical folk music of the New World or simply from the music of the Czech emigrants, which Dvořák liked to listen to during his stay in the United States.



In the third movement, American influence mixes with Slavic tradition in the rhythm of the *alla polacca*, and the last movement has themes native to the Far East, played by flute and oboe in unison, with the orchestra passes easily from the minor theme to the major one. Far from any exoticism, the art of Dvořák's orchestral work is in the field of pure music, and it is undoubtedly for this reason that Brahms appreciated it. Even in New York, when Dvořák encouraged his pupils to work on their own folk melodies, it was authentic recreation of popular folk music that he called for.

Overture di Ballo

Sir Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900)

Sullivan is best known for his collaboration with W.S. Gilbert on the composition of fourteen comic operas between 1871 and 1896. The producer Richard D'Oyly Carte brought Gilbert and Sullivan together and nurtured their collaboration. Many of the earlier operettas were first performed at the Crystal Palace in South London, and in 1881 D'Oyly Carte built the Savoy Theatre to present Gilbert and Sullivan joint works (which came to be known as the Savoy Operas) and founded the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, which performed and promoted Gilbert and Sullivan's works for more than a century. Prior to his collaboration with Gilbert, Sullivan had written a variety of other works in different genres, such as *The Masque at Kenilworth* (1864), an oratorio *The Prodigal Son* (1869) and a dramatic cantata *On Shore and Sea* (1871). 1866 saw the premieres of his *Symphony in E* (which DCO plans to play in October 2027), a *Cello Concerto*, and *Overture in C (In memoriam)*.



Another rarely performed work is the *Overture di Ballo* of 1870. After a short series of chords providing an emphatic introduction, there are three distinct but thematically linked sections – a polonaise, a waltz, and a lively gallop as a finale. Though Sullivan's most recorded orchestral work, *Overture di Ballo* has gained further exposure through its partial use in *Pineapple Poll* – a ballet of Sullivan's operetta music skilfully arranged by Sir Charles Mackerras. At its Crystal Palace debut on 31 August 1870, a critic wrote: "*A more sparkling and animated orchestral piece of its kind it would be difficult to name.*"

Interval – 20 minutes

Ice cream outside the auditorium + refreshments downstairs

Cello Concerto in B minor, op 104

Antonín Dvořák

I – Allegro

II – Adagio, *man non troppo*

III – Allegro moderato – Andante – Allegro vivo

It was during Dvořák's abortive stay in America that the suggestion of composing a cello concerto had been made by the Czech cellist Hanuš Wihan. Dvořák had gone to America to take up the post of Director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York. He had already attempted a *Cello Concerto no 1* in A minor in 1865, but had found it problematic and given up on it. While in New York, he heard Victor Herbert give the first performance of his *Cello Concerto no 2*. This inspired Dvořák to write a work – technically his *Cello Concerto no 2*, though not usually referred to by its number. Dvořák was particularly intrigued by Herbert's use of three trombones which played without drowning the soloist, and he adopted this in his scoring, first begun on 8 November 1894.

Unison clarinets announce a simple theme which soon builds to a climax, but just when the entrance of the soloist is expected, Dvořák announces the second subject with a famous horn solo. The second movement is a romance enshrining the memory of Josefa Čermáková, for whom Dvořák had an unrequited passion in 1865. He later married her sister Anna, but retained a great affection for Josefa, and on hearing that her heart condition had worsened, he wrote the melody "*Leave me alone*" (her favourite amongst his songs) into the concerto's middle movement. After an initial fanfare for the trio of horns, the mood of the Finale is more passionate and yearning, and contains reminiscences of the earlier movements near its end, before the cello, seemingly emotionally spent, leaves the orchestra to build up the final accelerating and fortissimo conclusion in the major key.

The concerto is highly prized by both soloists and audiences all over the world, but the ultimate compliment came from Dvořák's friend and mentor Johannes Brahms, who said "*had I known that such a cello concerto as that could be written, I would have written one myself*".

Joshua Lynch

Recipient of the Freda Dinn and Ida Marbett Award, St James Chamber Music Prize, and Prix de Musique de Chambre Festival Ravel, Joshua Lynch is a passionate devotee of chamber music and has already enjoyed a diverse and creative career. Joshua studied with Emma Ferrand and Gillian Thoday at the Royal Northern College of Music, and then continued his studies with Ursula Smith at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

Joshua is the cellist of the Cambridge String Quartet, which is 'Quartet in Residence' at Hughes Hall, Cambridge University. He has enjoyed several European tours and

has performed at Wigmore Hall, The Crucible (Music in the Round), and St Martin-in-the-Fields. In addition to his chamber music work, Joshua has also performed with Britten Sinfonia and the London Symphony Orchestra. He holds teaching positions at the Stephen Perse Foundation and St John's College School in Cambridge.

Joshua plays on a modern replica of a Testore cello made by Valentin Kaiser in Passau, Germany.

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 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 fund 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 – 1 MARCH 2026

FLUTE	Sue Hurst Kate Geary	VIOLIN 1	Kate Bailey ★ Misha Brazier Tope Neil Thomas Eleanor Bagg Andrew Frawley Rhiannon Parkinson Marisa Miller Caroline Churchill
+ PICCOLO	Sofia Piccoli		
OBOE	Alan Evans Dani McNeil		
CLARINET	Abigail Tylden Jackie Bushell		
BASSOON	Will Grainger Chris Grovenor	VIOLIN 2	Louise Graham ★ Mhairi Robertson Catherine Lloyd Evans Lisa Avenell Jeanette Thomas Alison Forrow Herbie Frankcom
HORN	Sean Frankcom Paul Willett James Seddon Geoff Haines		
TRUMPET	Thomas James Jonathan Shapiro	VIOLA	Heather Birt ★ Robert Spencer Rosie Bruce Louise Hill Margarete Lucas Rhian Frankcom Laura Williams
TROMBONE	Ross Law Charlie Vereker Prin Boon		
TUBA	Matt Sanders	CELLO	Spike Wilson ★ Polly Silk Sarah Higgins Andrew Clark Maxwell Lisa Rees Sarah Sparrow
TIMPANI	Chris Fletcher-Campbell		
PERCUSSION	Jackie Mann Rachel Williams	DOUBLE BASS	Chris Seddon Andrew Tyler

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NEXT CONCERTS

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

Tchaikovsky	<i>Voyevoda: Symphonic Ballad</i>
Tchaikovsky	<i>Violin Concerto (Mabelle Young-Eun Park)</i>
Dvořák	<i>Symphonic Poems: In Nature's Realm, Carnival Overture, Othello Overture</i>

23 Sunday 16 May 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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