



Spring Concert 2024

Guildhall, Gloucester: Sunday 24 March 2024 3 pm



GSO Christmas Cracker Concert 2023

Conductor: Glyn Oxley

Leader: Marie Roberts-Watkins

*Retiring collection in support of
Kingfisher Treasure Seekers*



Programme £2

A Night on the Bare Mountain

Modest Petrovich Mussorgsky 1839–1881

Modest Mussorgsky was one of the most enigmatic of Russian composers. A member of the group known as the 'Five', he was the least sophisticated, trained and cultured amongst his companions who included Rimsky-Korsakov and Balakirev. However, he was, perhaps, the genius of the group; an individualist with the most original ideas. Unfortunately, his potential was hampered by nervous disorders and an addiction to alcohol. As a result, many of his scores remained incomplete and it was Rimsky-Korsakov who undertook the task of editing and revision.



A Night on the Bare Mountain had a long period of gestation. As early as 1858 Mussorgsky had outlined a plan for a new opera, 'St. John's Eve', after a story by Gogol. No more was heard of this until 1860 when he informed Balakirev that he had been commissioned to set an act of Mengden's drama, *The Witch*, depicting a witches' Sabbath on St. John's Night.

Mussorgsky described the piece in a letter to Vladimir Nikolsky:

"So far as my memory doesn't deceive me, the witches used to gather on this mountain, ... gossip, play tricks and await their chief—Satan. On his arrival they, i.e. the witches, formed a circle round the throne on which he sat, in the form of a kid, and sang his praise. When Satan was worked up into a sufficient passion by the witches' praises, he gave the command for the sabbath, in which he chose for himself the witches who caught his fancy. So this is what I've done. At the head of my score I've put its content: 1. Assembly of the witches, their talk and gossip; 2. Satan's journey; 3. Obscene praises of Satan; and 4. Sabbath ... The form and character of the composition are Russian and original ... I wrote St. John's Eve quickly, straight away in full score, I wrote it in about twelve days, glory to God ... While at work on St. John's Eve I didn't sleep at night and actually finished the work on the eve of St. John's Day..."

Mussorgsky's original version was not performed during his lifetime, so he never heard the telling harmonic effects which so shocked Balakirev and Rimsky-Korsakov. The version we usually hear these days is the revised and edited version by Rimsky-Korsakov.

Today's concert features the original music of Mussorgsky, with its ferocious vigour and rhythmic dynamism which looks forward to Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*.

Programme notes by John Dalton (Making Music) and Wikipedia (edited by Damian Kenny)

The Water Goblin

Antonín Leopold Dvořák 1841–1904

Allegro vivace: The water goblin (flutes) alone.

Andante sostenuto: The girl (clarinet) and her mother (violins), who warns her not to go near the lake.

Allegro vivo: The girl ignores the warning (violins and oboes), falls into the lake, into the hands of the goblin.

Andante mesto come prima: The underwater world.

Un poco più lento e molto tranquillo: the girl sings a lullaby for her baby (flute and oboe).

Andante: The goblin and girl quarrel, the girl is permitted to go visit her mother, but must be back before the bells of the vespers.

Lento assai: The girl goes home to her mother (cellos and trombones), where they have a sad reunion.

Allegro vivace: The storm on the lake, the church bells are heard, after which knocking on the door and the goblin throws the dead child against the door.

Andante sostenuto: croaking frogs (piccolo and flutes); the mother's moaning about that unlucky day (cor anglais and bass clarinet); the mother's terrible distress (oboes, cellos and basses); the water goblin's mysterious disappearance into the depth of the lake.

This symphonic piece is written in the form of a rondo, with several themes, mostly four bars long, with patterns of three repeated notes. For example, the timpani gives a three-beat rhythm to the section where the girl wants to go to the lake, the church bells ring three times each at eight o'clock, and the water goblin knocks three times on the door.

Variations of the three notes indicate various characters. For example, for the goblin the three notes are played staccato (short), but for the daughter they are played long and almost glide over each other. The theme for the mother has the rhythm turned around.

Towards the end we hear a sudden fast swirl from the violins when the bridge cracks. The next section starts with a sudden E–C–G chord as the girl hits the water, then we hear again the water goblin theme. A lively allegro vivo follows, which depicts the swirling waters engulfing the girl, with a descending whole tone scale indicating the diabolic delight of the water goblin.

Programme notes taken from Wikipedia, edited by Damian Kenny



~~~ *INTERVAL* ~~~

# Symphony No 2 Opus 27

## *Sergei Vasilyevich Rachmaninoff 1873–1943*

*Largo – Allegro moderato*

*Allegro molto*

*Adagio*

*Allegro vivace*

In increasing demand as pianist and conductor both of his own and other composers' music, and unsettled by the political uncertainties following the abortive 1905 revolution, Rachmaninoff was finding it impossible to pursue a career as a composer in Moscow. In 1906 he took a house in a quiet district of Dresden where he hoped to find tranquillity and during the next three years he produced some of his finest works. The Second Symphony was written during 1907, a full decade after the catastrophic première of the First.



The symphony opens with a dark-hued introduction. We are at once presented with a 'motto' whose three elements, a sombre fragment on cellos and basses, two poignant chords from the woodwind and horns and a plaintive descending figure for the violins, will exert a strong influence throughout the symphony. In the restless main Allegro, both main themes are clearly derived from the motto, and the second of these themes dominates the impassioned coda of the movement.

The second movement is the scherzo of the symphony, though not given that title. It is a kind of Russian dance of unflagging vitality and brilliant orchestration. The central fugato section demonstrates extraordinary contrapuntal skill.

The Adagio is lyrical and rhapsodic, an extended romantic song with two main themes. The first appears as an introductory figure on the strings. The second, which follows at once, is an idyllic melody for solo clarinet. At the end of this movement Rachmaninov quotes the harmonies of his recently composed song, *The Heart's Secret*.

The Finale, in a triumphant E major, begins with a whirling dance. This is succeeded by one of the high points of the symphony, the definitive Rachmaninov Big Tune. This glowing, eloquent theme sumptuously unfolds before a swift coda brings the symphony to a resplendent conclusion.

The symphony was first performed on 26 January 1908 in Saint Petersburg. The composer himself conducted and the work was an instant success.

*Programme notes by John Kane (Making Music)*



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# Glyn Oxley

## *Musical Director of Gloucestershire Symphony Orchestra*

Glyn Oxley graduated from Edinburgh University with an honours degree in music. He studied conducting as part of his degree and his first concert was with the university chamber orchestra.

Glyn has since worked with ensembles of all ages and abilities, including the National Children's Orchestra, the Royal Forest of Dean Orchestra, Prima Corda, ENCORE and Junior ESTA and Gloucestershire Youth Orchestra. He was appointed musical director of Gloucestershire Symphony Orchestra in 2014.

He studied cello with Josephine Knight and subsequently with Jeanette Mountain and William Conway. He worked as a freelance orchestral player, conductor, and lower strings teacher in the North East before moving to Gloucestershire in 1993.

Glyn is Principal of the Gloucestershire Academy of Music. He works with talented young musicians from the ages of 5 to 18 and recently set up a new Youth Chamber Orchestra for Gloucestershire called *Inspire*, for Grade 8+ students. Throughout the pandemic he continued the academy's work – teaching online during lockdowns and then in small bubbles as restrictions lifted. He also staged several highly successful strings and wind



workshops, *#The Big String* and *#The Big Blast*, involving more than 170 students from across the region.

Glyn took over as musical director of the *Gloucestershire Young Musician of the Year* contest in 2014 and has seen it grow into one of the most prestigious musical competitions in the county.

# Gloucestershire Symphony Orchestra



The Gloucestershire Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1901 by Gloucester Cathedral organist Sir Herbert Brewer and conducted by Herbert Sumsion, John Sanders and Mark Finch, before Glyn Oxley was appointed in 2014. In recent years, the orchestra has greatly expanded the scope of its concert giving and performs in venues throughout the county. We are a friendly group of more than 50 members, and we welcome new players.

The orchestra's remit is to make classical music accessible to all – whether it be in schools, communities or even shopping centres! The orchestra regularly puts on interactive concerts for children, and sometimes joins forces with musicians and performers from other groups, including the Cheltenham Youth Choir, Mandy Godding Theatre Arts, Gloucestershire Boys' Choir, The Oriel Singers and St Cecilia Singers.

We enjoy performing live music and enjoy collaborating with other musical groups to perform joint concerts. We look forward to playing in our summer concert, the concerto concert by the Gloucestershire Young Musician 2024 in November, and together with other musical groups, another *Christmas Cracker* concert in December.

We are keen to welcome new members as players, particularly strings and brass players. For an informal audition, potential new members sit next to a section leader during rehearsals; string players should ideally be at least Grade 7 standard, with wind, brass and percussion players expected to be post Grade 8 standard.

Visit our website: [www.gloucestershiresymphony.org.uk](http://www.gloucestershiresymphony.org.uk)

Email us: [info@gloucestershiresymphony.org.uk](mailto:info@gloucestershiresymphony.org.uk)



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Or contact GSO chair, Gill Greenwell: Email: [gsochair@outlook.com](mailto:gsochair@outlook.com)



# Upcoming Concerts:

## Summer Children's Concert

*Saturday 15 June 4pm*

*St Laurence Church, The Shambles, Stroud, GL5 1JL*

**Dankworth** Tom Sawyer's Saturday  
**Adams** A Short Ride in a Fast Machine  
**John Williams** Jurassic Park  
**Klaus Badelt** Pirates of the Caribbean  
Other pieces to be confirmed.

## James Li, Concerto Concert as Young Musician of the Year 2024

*Sunday 17 November 2024 3pm*

*The Big Classical, Cheltenham College, Cheltenham*

Programme to be chosen by James Li and Glyn Oxley

Gloucestershire Young Musician 2025 Competition will be launched in September 2024. Please see the orchestra website for full details.

The competition is sponsored by Ann Heron and:



See our website for more details nearer the time, with links for buying tickets.

[www.gloucestershiresymphony.org.uk](http://www.gloucestershiresymphony.org.uk)

The orchestra gratefully acknowledges the help and support of our patron,  
the Rev Sarah Todd, Vicar of St Barnabas' Church, Gloucester

