

A watercolor illustration of a violinist, likely Stephanie Childress, seen from behind. She is wearing a vibrant red dress and is seated at a dark wooden table, playing a violin. The background is composed of soft, blended washes of grey, blue, and white, suggesting an outdoor setting. The overall style is artistic and evocative.

**Glazunov**

*Autumn*

*(from 'The Seasons')*

**Tchaikovsky**

*Violin Concerto*

**Shostakovich**

*Symphony No. 5*

**Conductor: Howard Williams**

**Soloist: Stephanie Childress**

Sinfonia of Cambridge

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2018 7:30pm

West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge

Programme

## PROGRAMME

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*“Autumn” from “The Seasons”*

GLAZUNOV

*Violin Concerto*

TCHAIKOVSKY

— INTERVAL —  
(20 minutes)

*Symphony No 5 in Eb major*

SHOSTAKOVITCH

HOWARD WILLIAMS *Conductor*

STEPHANIE CHILDRESS *Violin*

THE SINFONIA OF CAMBRIDGE

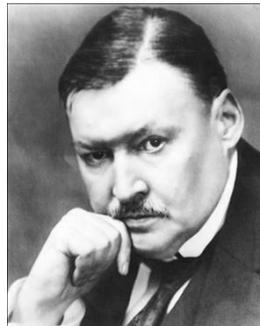
JAN KAZNOWSKI *Leader*

## ***Autumn from The Seasons***

**Aleksandr Glazunov (1865 - 1936)**

### ***Bacchanale and Appearance of the Seasons; Adagio; Apotheosis***

Glazunov was the major Russian symphonic composer of the post-Tchaikovsky generation. He studied piano from the age of 9, and began composing when he was 11, studying privately with Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov for two years from the age of 15. He had a fine ear and musical memory and, according to Rimsky, he progressed 'not from day to day but from hour to hour'. While his music is strongly coloured by the influence of Rimsky and the other Russian Nationalist composers, he was also open to broader influences, notably Liszt and Wagner. He was appointed professor at the St Petersburg Conservatory in 1899, and became its director in 1905. He strove to raise the conservatory's standards, and his innovations included an opera studio and a students' philharmonic orchestra. He concerned himself with the welfare of needy students (Shostakovich included), and at the end of each academic year personally examined hundreds of students and wrote brief comments on each. A blot on his reputation was the notorious 1897 premiere of Rachmaninoff's Symphony No 1, which he conducted, and which precipitated Rachmaninoff's three year depression. It was later claimed by the composer's wife that Glazunov seemed to be drunk at the time – not entirely implausible for a man who, according to Shostakovich, kept a bottle of vodka hidden behind his desk and sipped it through a tube during lessons. He left Russia for good in 1928 and settled in France with his wife, dying there at the age of 70.



His output was extensive, and eight completed symphonies, seven string quartets, and five concertos are but the tip of a huge iceberg. His penultimate opus (109) was the concerto for alto saxophone of 1934, which is the outstanding 'classical' concerto for the instrument. Whilst he wrote no operas he did compose scores for three ballets, as well as incidental music for plays. As Boris Schwarz writes in Grove's Dictionary: "There was a streak of academicism in Glazunov which at times overpowered his inspiration, an eclecticism which lacks the ultimate stamp of originality ... but he remains a composer of imposing stature and a stabilizing influence in a time of transition and turmoil."

*The Seasons* was the last of his ballet scores, and is probably the work by which he is best remembered. It was written in 1899 and first performed by the Imperial Ballet the next year, with the entire Imperial court in attendance. Libretto and choreography were by Marius Petipa, who had also worked on *Sleeping Beauty* and *Nutcracker*. There is no plot as such, rather its four scenes depict the seasons through divertissements à la Tchaikovsky. *Autumn* begins with a bacchanal, a drunken revel celebrating the grape harvest, although some might find the music

more suggestive of a ride in a Troika, then calms with a sequence of cameo appearances by the preceding seasons: *Winter*, *Spring*, then *Summer*. A charming *Little Adagio* is followed by a short dance for a satyr, then the bacchanal resumes (now in 6/8 time), increases in intensity, and ends in a shower of autumn leaves. Darkness descends, and the stars emerge, showing the beauty of the universe that lies beyond the changing seasons.

*note by John Cook*

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## **Violin Concerto in D major    Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840 – 1893)**

***Allegro moderato; Canzonetta: Andante; Finale: Allegro vivacissimo***

The three years between the completion of the score and the first performance of Peter Ilych Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto were punctuated by moments of personal, musical and political turmoil, as was the aftermath. Few concertos have struggled this hard to reach an audience and to gain acceptance. Because his disastrous marriage to Antonina Miliukova had provoked such a deep depression, Tchaikovsky fled to a resort on the shore of Lake Geneva to recuperate and to compose. He was joined there by the virtuoso violinist Iosef Kotek, and together they worked on the Violin Concerto. They teamed up in other ways as well,



to a point where friends felt that Kotek should not play the solo part at the première for fear his intimacy with Tchaikovsky might become known and provoke a scandal. Other leading virtuosos were reluctant to take it on for a variety of reasons. The first performance was eventually undertaken by Adolph Brodsky on December 4, 1881 in Vienna, under the baton of Hans Richter, but there was more trouble to come.

Johannes Brahms's violin concerto had been premièred one year earlier, so comparisons were inevitable. This is where the politics (well, musical politics) come in. The influential critic, Eduard Hanslick, was a devotee of Brahms and therefore hostile to almost everyone else. This time, Tchaikovsky was the victim of Hanslick's venom: 'Tchaikovsky's violin concerto poses for the first time the appalling notion that there can be works of music that stink to the ear.' Gleefully, other Viennese critics joined the attack: 'Such a piece of music, made up of motley bits of phrases stitched together, might be neo-German, but it is under any circumstances repulsive and barbaric...' (Wörz); 'Tchaikovsky's violin concerto sounds, in its brutal genius, in its abolition of all formal limits, like a rhapsody of nihilism' (Königstern). It was Jean Sibelius who remarked that no-one had ever erected a statue in memory of a critic. Several statues have been erected in memory of Tchaikovsky.

A number of hands helped to refine the work, and most commentators agree that the changes have been beneficial. Needless repetitions have been excised, and the solo part has been made more manageable and mellifluous. Tchaikovsky himself jettisoned the original slow movement, replacing it with the 'Canzonetta' we now know, written in a single day according to report. The overall result is so appealing that it is difficult to understand how those early critics failed to notice the concerto's merits. Above all, the work teems with melody; as in the violin concerto by Brahms, the tunes cascade one upon another, although Tchaikovsky's concerto gives virtuosity freer rein.

*note by William Salaman, originally for CCSO*

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## Symphony No. 5 in D minor

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906 - 1975)

***Moderato – Allegro non troppo; Allegretto; Largo; Allegro non troppo***

On 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1934 the first performance took place at the Leningrad Maly Theatre of Shostakovich's second opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtensk District*, and two days later it opened in Moscow (under the title *Katerina Izmailova*). In both cities the reception was ecstatic, and the opera remained successfully in both houses' repertoires for the next two years. At the end of December 1935 a new production opened at Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre, and at the same time the Maly Theatre brought a touring version of their production to Moscow, so three sold-out versions of the opera were running there simultaneously. This was an astonishing success for a 29-year old composer.



Then came 26 January 1936, when he was ordered to attend a performance of *Lady Macbeth* at the Bolshoi. Members of the Politburo, Stalin included, were present in the government box which, unfortunately, was positioned directly above the brass and percussion sections of the orchestra (which the conductor had seen fit to reinforce). Another occupant of Shostakovich's box reported that "every time the percussion and brass played *fortissimo* we saw Zhdanov and Mikoyan shudder, then laughingly turn round to Stalin" (who was out of sight behind a small curtain).

Shostakovich feared the worst, with good reason, for two days later the article 'Muddle Instead of Music' was published in *Pravda* – a direct attack on the opera, widely believed (probably falsely) to be written by Stalin himself: "The power of good music to infect the masses has been sacrificed to a petty-bourgeois, 'formalist' attempt to create originality through cheap clowning. It is a game of clever ingenuity that may end very badly". This was at the start of the 'Great Purge' when no one could feel secure - seemingly anyone, regardless of seniority or

reputation, might disappear in the night, and for the next two years he lived under the threat that it might indeed end very badly for him and his family.

It was under these terrifying circumstances that Shostakovich composed his Fifth Symphony, beginning it in April 1937 and finishing 6 months later. On 21 November 1937 the Leningrad Philharmonic gave the first performance, which was a triumph: “many of the listeners started to rise automatically from their seats during the finale ... a thunderous ovation shook the columns of the white Philharmonic Hall, and Evgeni Mravinski lifted the score high above his head, so as to show that it was not he, the conductor, or the orchestra who deserved this storm of applause, these shouts of ‘bravo’; the success belonged to the creator of this work”. Although there was a danger that the work’s reception could be seen as a subversive act of support for a wronged artist it seems that those in power were prepared to accept the piece as ‘a Soviet artist’s creative reply to just criticism’. This subtitle was not Shostakovich’s, incidentally, but was first used by a journalist at the time of the Moscow premiere two months later.

The symphony begins in declamatory mode with the cellos and basses, followed in close canon by the violins. Two times they leap up then down, but the intervals are progressively narrowed, and over the next bar this would-be heroic gesture is squeezed to a repeated unison note, short-short-long, from which the canon continues as accompaniment to a desolate violin melody. By the time the bassoons enter 13 bars in, echoing the opening, Shostakovich has stated most of the material from which the first movement derives. A ‘second subject’ in the violins follows the same contour as the opening motif, over a chugging version of the short-short-long rhythm, while a grotesque march later in the movement is the desolate melody on steroids (with the insistent rhythm speeded up on side drum). In the icy coda that same violin melody is inverted by the flute, and the movement evaporates into upward scales on the celesta. How were the authorities able to see in this tortured music a ‘reply to just criticism’?

The second movement is an ironic scherzo and trio with strong echoes of Mahler, a composer Shostakovich much admired, while the impassioned Largo reduced the audience at the premiere to tears – perhaps collective catharsis, acknowledging the horrors that all were enduring. The finale is, on the face of it, a bombastic march of triumph – by the end, after his earlier suffering, the Soviet artist is rejoicing with the populace in 35 bars of head-banging D major. Stalin and his advisors were not stupid; they must have been prepared to tolerate an artist of Shostakovich’s genius, overlooking subtexts so long as he did not overtly criticise the system and wrote ‘accessible’ music with good tunes. A year earlier he was probably wise to suppress his massive Fourth Symphony, a more overtly modernist work that ends pianissimo in the minor.

Since Shostakovich’s death musicologists have discovered a mass of quotations in this symphony that show he was playing ‘formalist’ tricks even when his life was in

danger. The first to be noticed was a quotation from Bizet's *Carmen* in the first movement – the floating violin second subject quotes “*L'Amour, l'amour*” (Love, love) from the *Habanera*; the later restatement of the theme in the flute, echoed by a dangerously high horn, puts it into the exact same key as in the opera. Subsequently it has been observed that the opening of the finale's march quotes “*Prends gard a tois*” (*Beware, beware*) from the same aria - most evidently when it is given to the fortissimo trumpets in the major at the end. The texts are significant, but so is the choice of opera - *Karmen*, it turns out, was the subsequent married name of a former lover by whom he had been rejected. Gerard McBurney has pointed out that the opening of the march is also a self-quotation, the opening notes echoing one of his *Pushkin Romances*, written immediately before the symphony, but not performed until 1940. The corresponding lyrics might be a description of Stalin's actions: “A barbarian painter with his somnolent brush blackens the genius painting, slapping over it senselessly his own lawless picture”. This is a masterpiece that carries multiple messages, and this ambiguity is at the heart of its greatness. The irony is that it would never have been written had it not been for the terrors of Stalinism.

*note by John Cook*

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## STEPHANIE CHILDRESS

Stephanie Childress is a violinist and conductor who is distinguishing herself as one of the most interesting and versatile musicians of her age. Born in London, her first musical recollections consisted of Doris Day and Queen. However, she became enthralled with the violin after hearing Vivaldi's *Four seasons*. She started learning the piano at the age of 5 before continuing onto the violin at the age of 6. She attended the Lycée Français Charles de Gaulle in London and the Royal College of Music Junior Department where she studied violin, piano and voice until 2015. She led both the RCMJD Symphony Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra. In October 2015, at the age of 16, she started as an undergraduate reading Music at St John's College, University of Cambridge, graduating in 2018.



She has performed extensively as a soloist and chamber musician in such venues as Sadler's Wells, the Elgar Room at the Royal Albert Hall and Wigmore Hall. She was a prize-winner at the Sevenoaks Young Musician of the Year and the Abingdon Concerto Competition and was awarded the LSO String Academy Candide Award for Outstanding Performance. In 2016, Stephanie was a finalist in the String Category of the Royal Over-Seas League Competition and a Category Finalist in both the 2016 and 2018 BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition.

Stephanie currently studies the violin with Pieter Schoeman, Leader of the London Philharmonic Orchestra and plays on an Italian violin made by Francesco Gobetti, Venice c 1710

As well as being a soloist, Stephanie is a highly accomplished orchestral musician. Stephanie was Concert Master of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain in 2015, having been co-leader in 2014. With the NYO Stephanie had the chance to perform in England's most distinguished concert halls such as the Barbican, the Royal Festival Hall, Birmingham Symphony Hall, The Sage in Newcastle, Leeds Town Hall and at Snape Maltings. For the NYOGB 2015 Summer Concert Series, she led the NYO for the premiere of a conductor-less modern work, *Re-Greening*, composed by Tansy Davies. This was then followed by Mahler's epic Ninth Symphony conducted by Sir Mark Elder. More recently, she led the Balsom Ensemble, a group of professional baroque players, for trumpeter Alison Balsom's tour of Germany in December 2016. In 2017, she was appointed as the artistic director of the tenth Young Virtuosi Summer Classical Music Festival.

As well as being involved in classical music, Stephanie has long been involved in musical theatre. She was the National Youth Music Theatre's youth ambassador, and assistant musical director for their 2016 production of *Brass*.

It is her love of theatre and opera which led Stephanie to conduct. She had the opportunity of shadowing the Music Staff at the Royal Opera House for the 2013 productions of *Gloriana*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Parsifal* and *Elektra* as part of her work experience. In 2017 she conducted Benjamin Britten's opera *The Rape of Lucretia* and his song cycle, *Les Illuminations*, at St. John's College Cambridge, followed by Lennox Berkeley's opera, *A Dinner Engagement* for the Cambridge University Opera Society. She recently conducted Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in the St John's College Chapel as well as the Cambridge University Gilbert and Sullivan Society's 2018 production of *Ruddigore* at the West Road Concert Hall. In April she made her conducting debut with the Southbank Sinfonia.

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## HOWARD WILLIAMS

Musical Director of the Sinfonia of Cambridge since 2013 and one of Britain's most experienced conductors on the international platform, Howard Williams has covered a formidable range of work both in the opera house and concert hall. In the UK, he has conducted the London Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic and BBC Symphony, as well as the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Royal Scottish National, Bournemouth Symphony, English Chamber Orchestra, City of London Sinfonia, London Sinfonietta, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, BBC Concert Orchestra and the Ulster Orchestra. He has conducted at the BBC Proms and at the Edinburgh, Leeds, Bath and Brighton Festivals, as at festivals in Budapest, Hong

Kong, and throughout France and Spain.

In Europe Howard has appeared with the Austrian Radio Symphony, Bavarian Radio Symphony, Swedish Radio Orchestra, Belgian Radio Orchestra, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, Symphony and Chamber Orchestras, Slovak Philharmonic, Hungarian National Philharmonic, Hungarian Radio Symphony, Budapest Philharmonic, Orchestre Nationale de Lyon, Orchestre de Strasbourg, Orchestre Symphonique de Montpellier, Orchestre de Picardie, RTE Symphony Orchestra, Dublin and the Portuguese National Symphony Orchestra.



His exceptionally large symphonic repertoire is matched in the theatre by nearly a hundred opera and ballet titles and a love of orchestral and choral collaboration. With the Baroque Orchestra of English Bach Festival he conducted productions at Covent Garden of Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, Purcell's *Fairy Queen* and *Dido and Aeneas* and Handel's *Oreste*. Following a two-year contract with the Royal Ballet at Covent Garden Howard appeared frequently with the Dutch National Ballet, Netherlands Dance Theatre and Hamburg Ballet.

Following his appointment in 1989 as Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Pécs Symphony Orchestra (now Pannon Philharmonic), Hungary, Howard devoted much time to working with the leading orchestras in that country. He has been awarded the Artisjus award and Bartók Medal for services to Hungarian music.

On leaving Pécs in 2000, Howard was created Permanent Guest Conductor by the orchestra. In the same year he was appointed Head of Conducting at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama as well as becoming Artistic Director of the Oxford Orchestra da Camera. His six years in Cardiff enabled him to explore and develop his attitude to training conductors and student orchestras. For two years he then directed the International Bartók Conducting Seminar in Szombathely, Hungary, and is now on the staff of the London Conducting Workshop. In 2016 he was appointed Professor of Conducting at the Royal College of Music.

# THE SINFONIA OF CAMBRIDGE

## **First Violin**

Jan Kaznowski  
Victoria Anderson  
Debbie Miller  
Jane Roper  
Alan Grayer  
Kate Bowers  
Heather Sutcliffe  
Edna Murphy  
Wendy Korner  
Emily Van der Aa-Burton

## **Second Violin**

Frances Poole  
Deborah Hopkins  
Emma Rowntree  
Katherine Cole  
Jo Finnemann  
John Mascal  
Philip Hines  
Sarah Bird  
Daniel Lau

## **Viola**

Penny Veryard  
Sophie Kirk  
Sophia Shellard  
Ruth Pellegrini  
Anne Atkinson

## **Cello**

Katie Birkwood  
Stuart Clow  
Antonia Burton  
Joanna Walmsley  
Daniel Grace  
Hartmut Kuhlmann  
Jan Axmacher

## **Bass**

Jon Halton  
Elaine Taylor  
John Richens

## **Flute**

Sally Landymore  
Alison Townend

## **Piccolo**

Julian Landymore

## **Oboe**

Rose Hilder  
Kate Molloy

## **Cor Anglais**

Kate Molloy

## **Clarinet**

Stephanie Reeve  
John Cook  
Viv Halton

## **E-flat Clarinet**

Stephanie Reeve

## **Bassoon**

Neil Greenham  
Simon Bond

## **Contrabassoon**

Katherine Worster

## **Horn**

James Liley  
Esther Osorio Whewell  
Tony Hawkins  
Laurie Friday

## **Trumpet**

Mark Simkins  
Alex McLean  
Alexandra McLean

## **Trombone**

Neil George  
Tom Yates  
David Musgrove

## **Tuba**

Edwin McClarty

## **Timpani**

Henry Wadsworth

## **Percussion**

Philip Howie  
Michael Cole  
Kirsty McDougall  
Peter Britton

## **Piano & Celeste**

Peter Britton

## **Harp**

Rohan Platts

## **SINFONIA OF CAMBRIDGE NEXT CONCERTS**

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**St John the Evangelist Church, Hills Road**

**SATURDAY 15<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2018  
7.30 PM**

**With the NEW CAMBRIDGE SINGERS:  
*Menotti's Amahl and the Night Visitors* (choir and orchestra) and *Britten's Ceremony of Carols* (choir and harp), conducted by Graham Walker**

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**West Road Concert Hall**

**SATURDAY 19<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2019  
7.30 PM**

**'Musical Pairs': Programme to include  
*Tchaikovsky's Romeo and Juliet Overture*  
and *Brahms' Double Concerto*, featuring Emma  
Lisney (violin) and Joy Lisney (cello),  
conducted by Howard Williams**

If you would like to know more about us  
please visit [www.sinfoniaofcambridge.org.uk](http://www.sinfoniaofcambridge.org.uk).  
If you have a specific query, please send an email to  
[info@sinfoniaofcambridge.org.uk](mailto:info@sinfoniaofcambridge.org.uk).