

ASSEMBLY HALL, TUNBRIDGE WELLS

Sunday, 14th November, 1971

at 3 p.m.

THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS

(Elgar)

KEITH ERWEN (Tenor) *as Gerontius*

JEAN ALLISTER (Mezzo-Soprano) *as the Angel*

BRIAN RAYNER COOK (Bass)

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHORAL SOCIETY

(Chorus Master: DEREK WATMOUGH)

ORCHESTRA

(Leader: RICHARD ENGLAND)

Conductor:

TREVOR HARVEY

Programme and Words - - - - 5p

THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS

"This is the best of me; for the rest I ate and drank and slept, loved and hated, like another; my life was as the vapour, and is not. But this I saw and knew; this, if anything of mine is worth your memory."

EDWARD ELGAR,
Birchwood Lodge, August 13th 1900.

THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS is scored for a very large Orchestra, in which the strings are occasionally divided into fifteen, eighteen and twenty parts, and the Chorus is made up of a small Semi-Chorus, 1st and 2nd Choruses and a Chorus of Angelicals for Women's voices only. The score is one of the fullest in English music.

Newman's poem in Part 1 sets out to describe the feelings of Gerontius whilst dying, and in Part 2 he sees through his dream, his Soul's transportation to the unseen world, and its reception by the ministering Angel of the Almighty's will. The mysteries that lie "on the other side" are vividly pictured through the poet's imagination, and the straining eye of a hungering fancy discloses his idea of the "maybe" of the Soul's future.

Edward Elgar's attention was attracted to this great poem, which required a mystic, a dreamer of dreams, to do justice to such a subject. Such a man was Elgar, and in this work he succeeds in creating the atmosphere so essential to transmit to an Audience the inner meaning of the poem.

Part 2 opens with a short Orchestral introduction of great serenity, setting the mood for the Soul of Gerontius "I went to sleep and now I am refreshed . . . I hear no more the busy beat of time . . . nor does one moment differ from the next . . . A duet follows between Gerontius and his Guardian Angel who leads him towards the place of Judgment, outside whose door are Demons, sneering and howling, trying to snatch away the Souls that pass . . . then the hubbub is left behind and far away comes the first Chorus of Angelicals, "Praise to the Holiest in the height", at first only Women's Voices, in eight parts, then the whole Chorus in a great Crescendo of praise. The climax of the whole work comes when Gerontius sees God (and we find that it is only for a moment), "Thy Judgment now is near, for we are come into the veiled presence of our God." Gerontius meets The Angel of the Agony, "Jesu, by that shuddering dread which fell on Thee . . . Jesu, spare those Souls which are so dear to Thee," and we hear in the distance the voices on earth praying, "Be merciful, be gracious, spare him Lord." The end is a wonderful one, with the Guardian Angel bidding Gerontius farewell, "softly and gently dearly ransomed Soul," whilst from the distance are heard the Angelicals in their Hymn of Praise, and the other Souls in prayers of entreaty and trust, "Lord, Thou hast been our refuge in every general." Between these crossing currents of Orchestral sound in three Choruses, divided into many parts, sing a seven-fold Amen, the voices swell to a final forte and then a quick diminuendo, the chord of D major ending a movement presenting a wonderful picture of heavenly peace and serenity.

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The exacting role of Gerontius is sung today by KEITH ERWEN who appears by permission of the Welsh National Opera Company, in which he is principal Tenor.

JEAN ALLISTER makes her fifth appearance with this Society since 1967, when we last performed Gerontius. Her re-appearance in the role of the Angel was inevitable in view of her superb performance then.

BRIAN RAYNER COOK has already established himself as a Leading exponent of the Bass solos in this work, and has received favourable notices in the National Press.

Our thanks are due to members of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Symphony Orchestra for their assistance which is much appreciated.

The Society is greatly indebted to its Patrons and Vice-Presidents for their support, which helps to bridge the serious gap between income and expenditure which nearly always arises in giving choral concerts. It is hoped that all those interested in the performance of choral music will become Patrons or Vice-Presidents.

G.W.

THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS

by
CARDINAL NEWMAN

Set to music by
EDWARD ELGAR

Words only

NOVELLO AND COMPANY LIMITED

THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS

(ELGAR)

I.

GERONTIUS	...	...	...	...	<i>Tenor</i>
THE PRIEST	...	...	...	...	<i>Bass</i>
ASSISTANTS	...	...	...	...	<i>Chorus</i>

GERONTIUS.

JESU, MARIA—I am near to death,
And Thou art calling me; I know it now.
Not by the token of this faltering breath,
This chill at heart, this dampness on my
brow,—
(Jesu, have mercy! Mary, pray for me!)
'Tis this new feeling, never felt before,
(Be with me, Lord, in my extremity!)
That I am going, that I am no more.
'Tis this strange innermost abandonment,
(Lover of souls! great God! I look to Thee,)
This emptying out of each constituent
And natural force, by which I come to be.
Pray for me, O my friends; a visitant
Is knocking his dire summons at my door,
The like of whom, to scare me and to daunt,
Has never, never come to me before;
So pray for me, my friends, who have not
strength to pray.

ASSISTANTS.

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison.
Holy Mary, pray for him.
All holy Angels, pray for him.
Choirs of the righteous, pray for him.

All Apostles, all Evangelists, pray for him,
All holy Disciples of the Lord, pray for him.
All holy Innocents, pray for him.
All holy Martyrs, all holy Confessors,
All holy Hermits, all holy Virgins,
All ye Saints of God, pray for him.

GERONTIUS.

Rouse thee, my fainting soul, and play the
man;
And through such waning span
Of life and thought as still has to be trod,
Prepare to meet thy God.
And while the storm of that bewilderment
Is for a season spent,
And, ere afresh the ruin on me fall,
Use well the interval.

ASSISTANTS.

Be merciful, be gracious; spare him, Lord.
Be merciful, be gracious; Lord, deliver him.
From the sins that are past;
From Thy frown and Thine ire;
From the perils of dying;
From any complying
With sin, or denying
His God, or relying
On self, at the last;
From the nethermost fire;
From all that is evil;
From power of the devil;
Thy servant deliver,
For once and for ever.
By Thy birth, and by Thy Cross,
Rescue him from endless loss;
By Thy death and burial,
Save him from a final fall;
By Thy rising from the tomb,
By Thy mounting up above,
By the Spirit's gracious love
Save him in the day of doom.

GERONTIUS.

Sanctus fortis, Sanctus Deus,
De profundis oro te,
Miserere, Judex meus,
Parce mihi, Domine.
Firmly I believe and truly
God is Three, and God is One;
And I next acknowledge duly
Manhood taken by the Son.
And I trust and hope most fully
In that Manhood crucified;
And each thought and deed unruly
Do to death, as He has died.
Simply to His grace and wholly
Light and life and strength belong.
And I love, supremely, solely,
Him the holy, Him the strong.
Sanctus fortis, Sanctus Deus,
De profundis oro te,
Miserere, Judex meus,
Parce mihi, Domine.
And I hold in veneration,
For the love of Him alone,
Holy Church, as His creation,
And her teachings, as His own.
And I take with joy whatever
Now besets me, pain or fear,
And with a strong will I sever
All the ties which bind me here.
Adoration aye be given,
With and through the angelic host,
To the God of earth and heaven,
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
Sanctus fortis, Sanctus Deus,
De profundis oro te,
Miserere, Judex meus,
Mortis in discrimine,

I can no more; for now it comes again,
That sense of ruin, which is worse than
pain,
That masterful negation and collapse
Of all that makes me man.

.

. And, crueller still,
A fierce and restless fright begins to fill
The mansion of my soul. And, worse and
worse,
Some bodily form of ill
Floats on the wind, with many a loathsome
curse
Tainting the hallowed air, and laughs, and
flaps
Its hideous wings,
And makes me wild with horror and dismay.
O Jesu, help! pray for me, Mary, pray!

Some Angel, Jesu! such as came to Thee
In Thine own agony.
Mary, pray for me. Joseph, pray for me.
Mary, pray for me.

ASSISTANTS.

Rescue him, O Lord, in this his evil hour,
As of old so many by Thy gracious power:—

Noe from the waters in a saving home;
(Amen.)

Job from all his multiform and fell distress;
(Amen.)

Moses from the land of bondage and despair;
(Amen.)

David from Golia and the wrath of Saul;
(Amen.)

. — So, to show Thy power,
Rescue this Thy servant in his evil hour.

GERONTIUS.

Novissima hora est; and I fain would sleep,
The pain has wearied me. . . . Into Thy
hands,
O Lord, into Thy hands. . . .

THE PRIEST AND ASSISTANTS.

Profiscicere, anima Christiana, de hoc mundo!
Go forth upon thy journey, Christian soul!
Go from this world! Go, in the Name of
God
The Omnipotent Father, Who created thee!
Go, in the Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord,
Son of the living God, Who bled for thee!
Go, in the Name of the Holy Spirit, Who
Hath been poured out on thee! Go, in the
name
Of Angels and Archangels; in the name
Of Thrones and Dominations; in the name
Of Princedoms and of Powers; and in the
name
Of Cherubim and Seraphim, go forth!
Go, in the name of Patriarchs and Prophets;
And of Apostles and Evangelists,
Of Martyrs and Confessors, in the name
Of holy Monks and Hermits; in the name
Of holy Virgins; and all Saints of God,
Both men and women, go! Go on thy course;
And may thy place to-day be found in peace,
And may thy dwelling be the Holy Mount
Of Sion:—through the Same, through Christ
our Lord.

II.

SOUL OF GERONTIUS	...	...	...	<i>Tenor.</i>
ANGEL	...	...	...	<i>Mezzo-Soprano.</i>
ANGEL OF THE AGONY	...	...	...	<i>Bass.</i>
DEMONS, ANGELICALS, AND SOULS	...	...	...	<i>Chorus.</i>

SOUL OF GERONTIUS.

I went to sleep; and now I am refreshed.
 A strange refreshment: for I feel in me
 An inexpressive lightness, and a sense
 Of freedom, as I were at length myself,
 And ne'er had been before. How still it is!
 I hear no more the busy beat of time,
 No, nor my fluttering breath, nor struggling
 pulse;
 Nor does one moment differ from the next.

This silence pours a solitariness
 Into the very essence of my soul;
 And the deep rest, so soothing and so sweet,
 Hath something too of sternness and of pain.

Another marvel: someone has me fast
 Within his ample palm;
 A uniform
 And gentle pressure tells me I am not
 Self-moving, but borne forward on my way.
 And hark! I hear a singing: yet in sooth
 I cannot of that music rightly say
 Whether I hear, or touch, or taste the tones.
 Oh, what a heart-subduing melody!

ANGEL.

My work is done,
 My task is o'er,
 And so I come,
 Taking it home,
 For the crown is won,
 Alleluia,
 For evermore.
 My Father gave
 In charge to me
 This child of earth
 E'en from its birth,
 To serve and save,
 Alleluia,
 And saved is he.
 This child of clay
 To me was given,
 To rear and train
 By sorrow and pain
 In the narrow way,
 Alleluia,
 From earth to heaven.

SOUL.

It is a member of that family
 Of wondrous beings, who, ere the world were
 made,
 Millions of ages back, have stood around
 The throne of God.
 I will address him. Mighty one, my Lord,
 My Guardian Spirit, all hail!

ANGEL.

All hail! my child,
 My child and brother, hail! what wouldest
 thou?

SOUL.

I would have nothing but to speak with thee
 For speaking's sake. I wish to hold with
 thee
 Conscious communion; though I fain would
 know
 A maze of things, were it but meet to ask,
 And not a curiousness.

ANGEL.

You cannot now
 Cherish a wish which ought not to be wished.

SOUL.

Then I will speak. I ever had believed
 That on the moment when the struggling soul
 Quitted its mortal case, forthwith it fell
 Under the awful Presence of its God,
 There to be judged and sent to its own place.
 What lets me now from going to my Lord?

ANGEL.

Thou art not let; but with extremest speed.
 Art hurrying to the Just and Holy Judge.

SOUL.

Dear Angel, say,
 Why have I now no fear of meeting Him?
 Along my earthly life, the thought of death
 And judgment was to me most terrible.

ANGEL.

It is because
Then thou didst fear, that now thou dost not
fear.
Thou hast forestalled the agony, and so
For thee bitterness of death is passed.
Also, because already in thy soul
The judgment is begun.

ANGEL.

A presage falls upon thee, as a ray
Straight from the Judge, expressive of thy lot.
That calm and joy uprising in thy soul
Is first-fruit to thee of thy recompense,
And heaven begun.

SOUL.

Now that the hour is come, my fear is fled;
And at this balance of my destiny,
Now close upon me, I can forward look
With a serenest joy.

But hark! upon my sense
Comes a fierce hubbub, which would make me
fear
Could I be frightened.

ANGEL.

We are now arrived
Close on the judgment-court; that sullen howl
Is from the demons who assemble there,
Hungry and wild, to claim their property,
And gather souls for hell. Hist to their cry

SOUL.

How sour and how uncouth a dissonance!

DEMONS.

Low-born clods
Of brute earth,
They aspire
To become gods,
By a new birth,
And an extra grace,
And a score of merits,
As if aught
Could stand in place
Of the high thought,
And the glance of fire
Of the great spirits,
The powers blest,
The lords by right,
The primal owners,
Of the proud dwelling
And realm of light,—

Dispossessed,
Aside thrust,

Chucked down,
By the sheer might
Of a despot's will,
Of a tyrant's frown,
Who after expelling
Their hosts, gave,
Triumphant still,
And still unjust,
Each forfeit crown
To psalm-droners,
And canting groaners,
To every slave,
And pious cheat,
And crawling knave
Who licked the dust
Under his feet.

ANGEL.

It is the restless panting of their being;
Like beasts of prey, who, caged within their
bars,
In a deep hideous purring have their life,
And an incessant pacing to and fro.

DEMONS.

The mind bold
And independent,
The purpose free,
So we are told,
Must not think
To have the ascendant.
What's a saint?
One whose breath
Doth the air taint
Before his death;
A bundle of bones,
Which fools adore,
Ha! ha!
When life is o'er.
Virtue and vice,
A knave's pretence.
'Tis all the same;
Ha! ha!
Dread of hell-fire,
Of the venomous flame,
A coward's plea.
Give him his price,
Saint though he be,
Ha! ha!
From shrewd good sense
He'll slave for hire;
Ha! ha!
And does but aspire
To the heaven above
With sordid aim,
And not from love.
Ha! ha!

SOUL.

I see not those false spirits ; shall I see
My dearest Master, when I reach His throne ?

ANGEL.

Yes,—for one moment thou shalt see thy Lord.

One moment ; but thou knowest not, my child,
What thou dost ask : that sight of the Most Fair
Will gladden thee, but it will pierce thee too.

SOUL.

Thou speakest darkly, Angel ! and an awe
Falls on me, and a fear lest I be rash.

ANGEL.

There was a mortal, who is now above
In the mid glory : he, when near to die,
Was given communion with the Crucified,—
Such, that the Master's very wounds were
stamped
Upon his flesh ; and, from the agony
Which thrilled through body and soul in that
embrace,
Learn that the flame of the Everlasting Love
Doth burn ere it transform. . . .

CHOIR OF ANGELICALS.

Praise to the Holiest in the height,
And in the depth be praise :

ANGEL.

. . . . Hark to those sounds !
They come of tender beings angelical,
Least and most childlike of the sons of God.

CHOIR OF ANGELICALS.

Praise to the Holiest in the height,
And in the depth be praise :
In all His words most wonderful ;
Most sure in all His ways !

To us His elder race He gave
To battle and to win,
Without the chastisement of pain,
Without the soil of sin.

The younger son He willed to be
A marvel in His birth :
Spirit and flesh His parents were ;
His home was heaven and earth.

The Eternal blessed His child, and armed,
And sent Him hence afar,
To serve as champion in the field
Of elemental war.

To be His Viceroy in the world
Of matter, and of sense ;
Upon the frontier, towards the foe,
A resolute defence.

ANGEL.

We now have passed the gate, and are within
The House of Judgment. . . .

SOUL.

The sound is like the rushing of the wind—
The summer wind—among the lofty pines.

CHOIR OF ANGELICALS.

Glory to Him, Who evermore
By truth and justice reigns ;
Who tears the soul from out its case,
And burns away its stains !

ANGEL.

They sing of thy approaching agony,
Which thou so eagerly didst question of.

SOUL.

My soul is in my hand : I have no fear,—

But hark ! a grand mysterious harmony :
It floods me, like the deep and solemn sound
Of many waters.

ANGEL.

And now the threshold, as we traverse it,
Utters aloud its glad responsive chant.

CHOIR OF ANGELICALS.

Praise to the Holiest in the height,
And in the depth be praise :
In all His words most wonderful ;
Most sure in all His ways !

O loving wisdom of our God !
When all was sin and shame,
A second Adam to the fight
And to the rescue came.

O wisest love ! that flesh and blood
Which did in Adam fail,
Should strive afresh against the foe,
Should strive and should prevail ;

And that a higher gift than grace
Should flesh and blood refine,
God's Presence and His very Self,
And Essence all divine.

O generous love ! that He Who smote
In man for man the foe,
The double agony in man
For man should undergo ;

And in the garden secretly,
And on the cross on high,
Should teach His brethren and inspire
To suffer and to die.

Praise to the Holiest in the height,
And in the depth be praise :
In all His words most wonderful ;
Most sure in all His ways !

ANGEL.

Thy judgment now is near, for we are come
Into the veiled presence of our God.

SOUL.

I hear the voices that I left on earth.

ANGEL.

It is the voice of friends around thy bed,
Who say the "Subvenite" with the priest.
Hither the echoes come; before the Throne
Stands the great Angel of the Agony,
The same who strengthened Him, what time
He knelt

Lone in the garden shade, bedewed with blood.
That Angel best can plead with Him for all
Tormented souls, the dying and the dead.

ANGEL OF THE AGONY.

Jesu! by that shuddering dread which fell on
Thee;
Jesu! by that cold dismay which sickened
Thee;
Jesu! by that pang of heart which thrilled in
Thee;
Jesu! by that mount of sins which crippled
Thee;
Jesu! by that sense of guilt which stifled Thee;
Jesu! by that innocence which girdled Thee;
Jesu! by that sanctity which reigned in Thee;
Jesu! by that Godhead which was one with
Thee;
Jesu! spare these souls which are so dear to
Thee;
Souls, who in prison, calm and patient, wait
for Thee;
Hasten, Lord, their hour, and bid them come
to Thee,
To that glorious Home, where they shall ever
gaze on Thee.

SOUL.

I go before my Judge. . . .

VOICES ON EARTH.

Be merciful, be gracious; spare him, Lord.
Be merciful, be gracious; Lord, deliver him.

ANGEL.

. . . . Praise to His Name!

O happy, suffering soul! for it is safe,
Consumed, yet quickened, by the glance of God.

SOUL.

Take me away, and in the lowest deep
There let me be,
And there in hope the lone night-watches keep,
Told out for me.

There, motionless and happy in my pain,
Lone, not forlorn,—

There will I sing my sad perpetual strain,
Until the morn,

There will I sing, and soothe my stricken
breast,

Which ne'er can cease
To throb, and pine, and languish, till possess
Of its Sole Peace.

There will I sing my absent Lord and Love:—
Take me away,

That sooner I may rise, and go above,
And see Him in the truth of everlasting day.

.

SOULS IN PURGATORY.

Lord, Thou hast been our refuge: in every
generation;
Before the hills were born, and the world was,
from age to age Thou art God.

Bring us not, Lord, very low: for Thou hast
said, Come back again, ye sons of Adam.

.

Come back, O Lord! how long: and be
entreated for Thy servants.

.

ANGEL.

Softly and gently, dearly-ransomed soul,
In my most loving arms I now enfold thee,
And o'er the penal waters, as they roll,
I poise thee, and I lower thee, and hold thee.

And carefully I dip thee in the lake,
And thou, without a sob or a resistance,
Dost through the flood thy rapid passage take,
Sinking deep, deeper, into the dim distance.

Angels, to whom the willing task is given,
Shall tend, and nurse, and lull thee, as thou
hest;

And Masses on the earth, and prayers in
heaven,
Shall aid thee at the Throne of the Most
Highest.

Farewell, but not for ever! brother dear,
Be brave and patient on thy bed of sorrow;
Swiftly shall pass thy night of trial here,
And I will come and wake thee on the
morrow.

SOULS.

Lord, Thou hast been our refuge, &c. Amen.

CHOIR OF ANGELICALS.

Praise to the Holiest, &c. Amen.

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHORAL SOCIETY

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December 12th, 1971 at 3 p.m.

Assembly Hall

**Annual Carol Concert
with 100 Children Performers
and the
Salvation Army Band**

December 18th, 1971 at 7.30 p.m. in St. John's Church

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Music for Christmas
(In aid of the British and Foreign Bible Society)

March 26th, 1972 at 3 p.m.

Assembly Hall

St. Matthew Passion
(*Bach*)