

*Edward Elgar*

# The Dream of Gerontius

**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2014 at 3pm**

**Assembly Hall – Tunbridge Wells**

Conducted by Rebecca Miller

Programme £2

*Royal Tunbridge Wells*

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## The Dream of Gerontius, op 38



By Edward Elgar

An oratorio for mezzo-soprano, tenor, bass, full choir and orchestra, based on the poem by Cardinal John Newman.

The oratorio is in two parts:

Part 1 (35 minutes)

*Interval* (20 minutes)

Part 2 (60 minutes)

### Programme Notes

The Dream of Gerontius had its first performance at the Birmingham Festival of 1900, but 'performance' may be too strong a word, for it was badly rehearsed and hardly comprehended by most of the performers and listeners. Yet Elgar on finishing it could write without boastfulness: "*This is the best of me*"; and this, despite subsequent masterworks, has remained the opinion of many. Elgar in an interview for the Musical Times of October 1900 said that the poem by John Henry Newman, out of which he had selected the libretto, had been "*soaking in my mind for at least eight years*." The subtle and many-faceted interweaving of the large modern symphony orchestra and the voices – themselves sometimes verging on the instrumental – removed at one great step English festival choral music from its Handelian and Mendelssohnian tradition.

The opening Prelude is a successive experience of leading themes wonderfully scored, especially in the highly elaborate string parts (thanks to Elgar the violinist) and in the writing for low flutes when those strings are muted to begin the uneasy berceuse representing the fitful sleep of Gerontius on his death-bed.

Conspicuous in the opening solo is the very soft multiple division of the strings – once into no less than eighteen parts – for the "*emptying out of each constituent and natural force*." The first choral sound is the prayer of Gerontius's

friends: *Kyrie Eleison* on the unaccompanied semi-chorus, with the main chorus, soberly accompanied by divided violas and 'cellos, amplifying the prayer with their petitions.

The solo 'set piece' in this first part is Gerontius's *Sanctus fortis* ranging through many moods and serving both as prayer and declaration of faith. Within it are heard not only the multiple-strings 'disintegration' chords but also a presentiment of the devilish music of the second part. The graphic silence at Gerontius's death speaks for itself. It is broken by the trombones and the bass-solo priest wending the soul on its way with the injunction *Proficiscere anima Christiana*, an idea taken up in stately climax by the full power of chorus and orchestra, then going on in an ascending, consoling march towards the next world, with the opening prayer almost the last thing to be heard.

Part II begins with a tender evocation by muted strings of the new world in which Gerontius finds himself (not an accidental in sight for eighteen bars!). The "heart-subduing melody" that he hears is a presage of the Angel's *alleluia* refrain, which in its turn has its own beautiful refrain on the horns. The opening 'question and answer' dialogue of Gerontius and his guardian angel leads to a number of ever-bigger musical paragraphs: first a euphonious duet ("*a presage falls upon me*"), then the extended and bitter snarls of the demons in chorus, and to cap all, the tremendous apotheosis of Newman's great hymn *Praise to the Holiest*.

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Shortly after its close comes the intercession of the Angel of the Agony, with soft Wagnerian brass in its accompaniment. Thereafter there is the searing exposure to God's glance where at Elgar's direction every instrument must for one moment exert its fullest force. The work reaches its serene end with the Angel's farewell to the soul of Gerontius as it is consigned to purgatory (*Softly and gently*). The Angel's solo is combined with prayers on earth and the angelic voices singing Praise to the Holiest in the distant height.

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*This programme note was written by Ivor Keys in 2010 and supplied through Making Music's programme note service.*

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*The organisation was founded in 1935 at the instigation of the composer Sir George Dyson (1883–1964) who was its first Chairman and President. Sir George conducted RTWCS in 1943/4 and later became the society's President.*

## THE LIBRETTO

Such is the popularity today of Elgar's oratorio that it is easy to overlook the fact that Newman's poem, which Elgar took as the basis of his libretto, had experienced remarkable success in its own right long before Elgar turned his serious attention to it. It was reprinted numerous times during Newman's own lifetime, translated into French and German, and carried by General Gordon whose handwritten annotations were meticulously copied by admirers onto their own copies after Gordon's death at Khartoum.

Although Elgar was forced by impending deadlines to work quickly in adapting Newman's poem into a workable libretto, it cannot have been an easy task. Although the libretto for Part One of the oratorio required a fairly limited reduction of Newman's text, Part Two was a different matter. Newman's poem is more than twice the length of Elgar's libretto, requiring Elgar to omit whole sections from Newman's poem while maintaining the narrative thrust which gives the work such vitality. Today, Newman's poem can be regarded as something of a period piece, a dramatic representation of the Catholic theology of death written to enlighten a largely uneducated Catholic congregation. It is through Elgar's libretto that the poem lives on.



*"I cycled over from Ledbury to lunch with him ... he was greatly relieved at having that instant written his name under the score of the last bar [of Gerontius] ... I begged Elgar to remain just as he was while I went down and fetched my camera." - William Eller, 3 August 1900*

Space prevents a reproduction of Newman's complete text here, but we present here Elgar's full libretto, sung today by choirs the world over.

## PART ONE

### *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.  
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 each 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 multi-form 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*

Proficiscere, 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 today be found in peace,  
And may thy dwelling be the Holy Mount of Sion:  
Through the Same, through Christ our Lord.

## **PART TWO**

### *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 wond'rous 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 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 judgement 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 judgement is begun.  
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 judgement-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,  
When life is o'er.  
Ha! Ha!

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,  
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 Judgement. . .

*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 souls  
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 judgement 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.  
Take me away, and in the lowest deep  
There let me be.

#### *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, 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 liest;  
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.  
Farewell! Farewell!

#### *Souls*

Lord, Thou hast been our refuge, etc. Amen

#### *Choir of Angelicals*

Praise to the Holiest, etc. Amen.

## Cardinal Newman



John Henry Newman was born in London in 1801, the eldest of six children of a London banker. He grew up in the Church of England. As a teenager he experienced a deep religious conversion and resolved to spend the rest of his life in the pursuit of holiness.

In 1822 he was elected a fellow of Oriel College, Oxford, was ordained as an Anglican priest in 1825, and in 1828 became the Vicar of the University church of St Mary's. He became a leading light in the Oxford Movement, seeking to recover elements of catholicity within Anglicanism. In 1843 he resigned his living at St Mary's and retired to a converted stable block at Littlemore near Oxford. He was joined there by a number of his young followers and together they lived an austere semi-monastic life. In 1845, an Italian priest, Father Dominic Barberi, visited Littlemore and heard Newman's first confession; the next day he was received into the Roman Catholic Church.

Newman moved to Birmingham in 1849 in a period when the city was becoming one of the great centres of Catholic revival in England, and in which Newman was such a profound influence. He wrote *The Dream of Gerontius* in 1865; a narrative poem about the progress of a soul from death to salvation, and it was in Birmingham that Elgar's oratorio was first performed.

Newman was always a prolific writer of letters, sermons and articles, and this continued throughout his life. His work was sometimes misunderstood, and a number of projects that he was asked to lead or support seemed to come to nothing. At one stage he was even wrongly suspected of doctrinal unorthodoxy.

But In 1879, Newman was made a Cardinal by Pope Leo XIII, choosing as his motto the words "*Cor ad cor loquitur*" (heart speaks to heart). He lived out the rest of his days, quietly and still writing, at the Birmingham Oratory. He died in August 1890; his funeral procession in Birmingham attracted crowds of 15-20,000 onlookers, and he was lauded in the national press both in England and abroad.

In 1958 the cause for his canonisation was opened, and Pope Benedict XVI beatified Cardinal Newman in 2010 in Birmingham during his state visit to the U.K.

Many people nowadays may be put off *Gerontius* because of its overt religiosity. But even in his own day Newman's most famous hymn, *Lead Kindly Light*, was often mocked or quoted ironically. But although Newman's original poem *Gerontius* may be out of print, it is still sung. Newman had no great gift for the glittering line but Elgar's music helps convey what the poem is really about – not just intellectual theorising, but an attempt to express the insight that all will be well. It may well be "just a dream", but Newman probably believed he knew this from direct personal experience.

*Adapted from various sources.*

## Forthcoming music events in and around Tunbridge Wells

### ***For RTWCS events see back cover***

#### **Quorum Chamber Choir**

Saturday 15 Nov 2014 7.30 pm St Mary's Church, Langton Green: Programme to include sacred choral music & lighter items

#### **Mayfield Festival Choir**

Sunday 16 Nov 2014 at 7.30 pm in St Dunstan's, Mayfield: with Primavera Chamber Orchestra; Haydn - *Mass in Time of War*, *Insanae et vanae curae*; Ireland - *Greater love hath no man*; Walford Davies - *Short Requiem in memory of those fallen in the War*.

#### **Lamberhurst Music Festival**

Friday 21 Nov 2014 at 7.30pm in St Mary's Church, Lamberhurst: Red Priest - "Carnival of Seasons" - including Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*.

#### **CODA**

Saturday 22 Nov 2014 at 7.15 pm in the Organ Room at Kent College, Pembury: Sarah Beth Briggs (piano)

#### **Tonbridge Philharmonic Society**

Saturday 22 Nov 2014 at 7.30 pm in Tonbridge School Chapel: Carl Orff - *Carmina Burana*; Zoltán Kodály - *Missa Brevis*. Conductor: Matthew Willis.

#### **Royal Tunbridge Wells Symphony Orchestra (RTWSO)**

Sunday 7 Dec 2014 at 3.00 pm in Assembly Hall Theatre, Tunbridge Wells: Roderick Dunk conductor, Cynthia Fleming (violin) and David Lee (horn): Humperdinck, R. Strauss, Tchaikovsky, Monti, Silvestri & Anderson.

#### **Penshurst Choral Society**

Sunday 7 Dec 2014 at 6.30 pm in Penshurst Church: Carols by Candlelight

#### **Music at King Charles the Martyr**

Saturday 13 December at 6:30 pm: Christmas concert with the King Charles Singers and Pentagon

## The Performers

### **Rebecca Miller** – *RTWCS Music Director*



Photo Richard Haughton

Conductor Rebecca Miller is acclaimed as a compelling, insightful and energetic force on the podium. Highly regarded for her sophisticated music making and command of varied composers and styles, she is also praised for her ability to communicate with audiences of all ages.

2014 saw Rebecca debut with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, with the Royal Northern Sinfonia at the Ryedale Festival and the Sage Gateshead, and with the BBC Concert Orchestra – both at the Royal Festival Hall and at the Royal Albert Hall as part of the 2014 BBC Proms. Having previously released two CDs (including the award-winning 2011 disc for Signum Records featuring the world-premiere recording of Aaron Jay Kernis' *Goblin Market*), she has five forthcoming recordings to be released in the next two years - with the OAE (CPE Bach/Signum, 2014), Royal Northern Sinfonia (Haydn/Signum, 2015, Bristow/New World Records, 2015), BBC Concert Orchestra (Hadley/Dutton, 2015), and BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra (Beach, Hopekirk, Chaminade/Hyperion, 2016).

First Prize winner in the fourth Eduardo Mata International Conducting Competition, Miller has guest conducted the Orquesta Filarmónica de la UNAM, Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional and the state orchestras of Aguascalientes, Yucatan, and Sinaloa, as well as the Teresa Carreño Youth Orchestra of Venezuela. Elsewhere she has guest conducted the London Sinfonietta, Orchestra of the Swan, and Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra (Israel), and conducted extensively in the US, including with the Houston Symphony, Huntsville Symphony, Reno Philharmonic, Williamsport Symphony, Santa Cruz Symphony, Musiqá Houston, and the Bard Festival in New York. She is proud to be one of the Southbank Sinfonia's only regular guest conductors, and upcoming engagements include concerts with the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional (Mexico), the Salomon Orchestra in London, and the Bakersfield Symphony in California.

From 2007 to 2010 Rebecca Miller was Resident Conductor of the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra in New Orleans, and previously was Conducting Fellow of the Houston Symphony. Born in California, Rebecca Miller completed her studies in piano at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. She studied conducting at Northwestern University and at the Aspen Music Festival, and was the Paul Woodhouse Junior Fellow in Conducting for two years at London's Royal College of Music.

### **Jane Gomm** – *Orchestra Leader*



Sussex-born Jane studied the violin at the Royal Academy of Music in London. Since leaving college she has been a member of the London Mozart Players, the London Festival Orchestra and the Orchestra of St. Johns and in 1986 joined the City of London Sinfonia. With these orchestras she has toured Europe, Nigeria, Australia and South America.

Jane also directs her own chamber music group, The Ruskin Ensemble and has performed with them at the Edinburgh and Brighton Festivals, the British Embassy in Paris, Number 11 Downing Street and music clubs and country houses throughout the British Isles and the Netherlands. She also leads improvisational workshops with children of all ages and cultural backgrounds and gives concerts in hospices, hospitals and residential homes.

## Jeanette Ager (*mezzo-soprano*)

Jeanette Ager was awarded an Exhibition to study at the Royal Academy of Music and subsequently won the Gold Medal in the Royal Overseas League Music Competition and the Richard Tauber Prize as well as a place on the Tillett Trust's Young Artist Platform.

As a soloist, Jeanette's concert and oratorio work has included recitals and other appearances at the Wigmore Hall; Handel's Messiah at St David's Hall, Cardiff; Elgar's Dream of Gerontius at the Queen Elizabeth Hall; Tippett's Child of our Time at the Royal Festival Hall; Verdi's Requiem at Gloucester Cathedral; Beethoven's Missa Solemnis at The Barbican Hall; Mahler's 2nd Symphony at the Bridgewater Hall and Mozart's Mass in C minor at the Cadogan Hall. Jeanette was proud to sing Elgar's Sea Pictures with the RPO under the baton of Barry Wordsworth. In addition to performances at many of the leading venues in the United Kingdom, Jeanette's solo work has taken her to Bermuda, the Czech Republic, Spain, Libya and China.



Her operatic roles have included Cherubino in The Marriage of Figaro (Mozart); 3rd Lady in The Magic Flute (Mozart); Dido in Dido & Aeneas (Purcell); The Marquise of Birkenfield in La Fille du Regiment (Donizetti); Rosina in The Barber of Seville (Rossini) Suzuki in Madama Butterfly (Puccini) and Thea in The Knot Garden (Tippett). With the Royal Opera House she appeared as one of the Apprentices in Wagner's Die Meistersinger at Covent Garden.

She has recorded for Hyperion, Deutsche Grammophon and Philips.

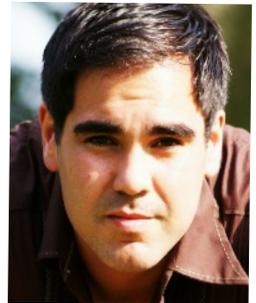
Jeanette recently sang the Angel in the first ever performance of Elgar's Dream of Gerontius in China. She performed at the 2009 Three Choirs Festival singing Britten's Spring Symphony and John McCabe's Songs of the Garden, also broadcast on Radio 3.

Jeanette is chair of the Toni V Fell Trust, which helps young singers at the start of their career.

## Ben Thapa (*tenor*)

Ben Thapa studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, the Royal College of Music and the Wales International Academy of Voice with Dennis O'Neill, supported by the Musicians Benevolent Fund, the Leverhulme Trust and the Wagner Society.

Opera roles include: President (Stockhausen Mittwoch aus Licht, Birmingham Opera Company/Graham Vick 2012, BBC Proms 2013), Vanya Kudrjas (Katya Kabanova, Scottish Opera), Tamino (Magic Flute, Regents Opera, Ryedale Festival Opera), Florestan (Fidelio, Opera Minima), Armed Man/Priest (Magic Flute, Garsington), First Prisoner (Fidelio, Garsington), Mat of the Mint (Royal Opera), Kuzka (Kovanschina, Birmingham Opera Company/Graham Vick), Jepthe (Jepthe, Ryedale), Corebo (La Didone, GSMD), Telemaco (Il Ritorno d'Ulisse, GSMD), Dick Johnson (Fanciulla del West, Opera Up Close), Tito (La Clemenza di Tito, Teatru Manoel, Malta).



Roles understudied include: Actaeon (Diana and Actaeon, Royal Opera), Max (Der Freischütz, Opéra Comique, Paris), Tamino (Garsington Opera), Florestan (Garsington Opera), Servant (The Killing Flower, Music Theatre Wales), Siegmund (Die Walküre, David Syrus/Wagner Society).

Concert work includes Monteverdi Vespers (Monteverdi Choir/John Eliot Gardiner), Elgar Dream of Gerontius (Brian Kay), Mendelssohn Elijah and Verdi Requiem (GLive Guildford), Handel Messiah (Concerts from Scratch/Royal Albert Hall, Hanover Band, Manchester Camerata), Vaughan Williams Serenade to Music (Royal Festival Hall/Ivor Setterfield/Philharmonia, Cadogan Hall), Rachmaninov The Bells (King's College Cambridge), Mozart Requiem (CFS/RAH), Rossini Petite Messe Solennelle (Jesus College Cambridge) and a Leeds Town Hall recital with Dr. Simon Lindley.

Upcoming engagements include Elgar Dream of Gerontius in Tewkesbury Abbey and Ripon Cathedral, Handel Messiah for the Manchester Camerata, Beethoven 9th Symphony at St. David's Hall, Cardiff and the understudies of all tenor roles in Philip Glass' new commission The Trial for Music Theatre Wales, performing at the Linbury Theatre Covent Garden and on tour.

## Michael Pearce (*bass-baritone*)



Michael's long and varied solo career in music has taken him all over the world, including recitals and opera galas in the Philippines, and concert tours in Brazil, China and Israel.

A choral scholar at St John's College, Cambridge, he entered the singing profession in his early thirties after a successful teaching career (head of Mathematics at a comprehensive school in West Sussex) and after a few years of vocal study won the first GKN English Song award in Brighton. Part of his prize was a critically acclaimed recital of English Song at the Wigmore Hall, London.

He has given solo performances at most of the major festivals throughout Europe, and his numerous London appearances include Haydn's Creation at the Barbican, Verdi's Requiem at the Royal Albert Hall and Mahler's 8th Symphony at the Royal Festival Hall.

Michael's commercial recordings include Handel's Coronation Anthem and Bach's B minor Mass. He has also recorded the part of Bam in Holliger's short opera What Where. He has given numerous radio broadcasts and recitals, both on the BBC and abroad, whilst his TV appearances include Walton's Belshazzar's Feast at the RTE Irish proms.

At the Royal Opera House he has given solo performances in Thérèse, Capriccio, Die Meistersinger (Ortel) and Salome. Elsewhere he was Dr P in The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat (Music Theatre Wales), Herald (The Burning Fiery Furnace) and Balstrode (Peter Grimes) – both with Kent Opera, Becket (Assassinio nella Cattedrale) with Oper Bergen in Norway and Tonio in I Pagliacci with Pimlico Opera. In his debut at Scottish Opera he created the role of Dundas (Horne: Friend of the People: world premiere 1999).

Michael's recent concert performances included Beethoven Choral Symphony at Canterbury Cathedral, Haydn's Nelson Mass at Southwark Cathedral and Beverley Minster, Verdi's Requiem at Chichester Cathedral and Elgar's Dream of Gerontius at Ellesmere Port. He is currently preparing Schubert's Winterreise song cycle for performances in Petersfield and Chichester next year.

Michael moved to SW France in 2008 but returns frequently to the UK to perform in concerts around the country and teach at the University of Chichester.



# RTWCS Orchestra

## Violin 1

Jane Gomm  
Iva Butler  
Nicky Goodwin  
Anne Martin  
Andrew Laing  
Rachel Hess  
Tim Good  
Rachel Eyres

## Violin 2

Gwyneth Barkham  
Julia Brocklehurst  
Frances Clack  
Julia Atkinson  
Julia Chellel  
Shareen Godber

## Viola

Gwendolyn Fisher  
Ariane Alexander  
Lynn Whitley  
Jane Taunton

## 'Cello

Andrew Fuller  
Robert Truman  
Lawrence Durkin  
Ethan Merrick

## Double Bass

Robert Hart  
Ingela Weeks  
Colin Moore

## Flute / Piccolo

Libby Summer  
Claire Langford  
Sarah Hein

## Oboe

Helen Pye  
Clare Worth

## Cor Anglais

Christine Geer

## Clarinet

Andrew Sutton  
Kate Fish  
Andrew Muir

## Bassoon

Julia Staniforth  
Jo Turner

## Contra Bassoon

Catherine Duckett

## Horns

David Clack  
Tom Bettley  
Dan Coghill  
Jonathan Calvert

## Trumpets

Alex Cromwell  
Miles Maguire  
Andrew Hendrie

## Trombones

Effie Sparkhall  
Alan Gout

## Bass Trombone

Ian Fasham

## Tuba

Andrew Kershaw

## Timpani

John Rockliffe

## Percussion

Tony Wagstaff  
Seb Guard  
Nigel Shipway

## Harp

Anna Wynne

## Organ

Chris Harris

# RTWCS Choir

## Sopranos

Elaine Abbs  
Rachel Balcombe  
Diana Blower  
Sylvia Byers  
Heather Champion  
Maureen Chapman  
Patsy Dale  
Jill Dunstall

Joyce Eckett  
Rosemary Frost  
Elena Gente  
Katie Horner  
Rosemary Hughes  
Evelien Hurst-Buist  
Eve Johnson  
Kim Keeler

Elena Lewis Grey  
Helen MacNab  
Anne Metherell  
Ellie Morton  
Louise Packham  
Eileen Phillips  
Toni Preston  
Pat Prior

Helena Read  
Glenda Revell  
Ann Spillman  
Clare Summons  
Sue Townsend  
Catherine Whitlock

## Altos

Beth Breen  
Margaret Butcher  
Pauline Coxshall  
Jean Finch  
Joanna Finlay  
Peggy Flood

Ruth Gray  
Celia Grew  
Rebecca Harris  
Judith Henderson  
Imelda Eve  
Sheila Jones

Caroline Moss  
Magali Nicole  
Ginny Osborne  
Judy Price  
Melissa Richards  
Ros Robertson

Jenny Selway  
Yvonne Spencer  
Sue Taylor  
Muriel Thatcher  
Liza Waller  
Jane Walters

## Tenors

Peter Elliott  
Tom Fitzpatrick  
David Gook  
Sharon Harrison

Guy Huntrods  
Gareth Looker  
Peter Mace  
Peter Rosling

Olivia Seaman  
Michael Selway  
John Simmons  
Alan Spencers

Michael Spencer  
Paul Spencer  
Neil Townsend

## Basses

Michael Barker  
Gerald Chew  
Pat Connolly  
Roy Dunstall  
Gavin Grant

David Ham  
Nicholas Humphrey  
Trevor Hurrell  
Jonnie Jones  
David Lyall

David Miller  
Chris Reece  
Mark Rees  
Eric H Scott  
John Spary

Clive Steward  
Martin Williams  
David Wright



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The majority of arts-based charities depend on voluntary financial support. Our singing members pay an annual subscription which roughly covers our overheads but the income from the sale of tickets is rarely enough to cover the cost of hiring the concert hall and paying for the orchestra and soloists.

Becoming a Friend or Patron helps us to close the gap and at the same time guarantees a preferential choice of a 'best seat in the house' for our Autumn, Christmas and Spring concerts. Friends and Patrons also receive periodic Newsletters, and are invited to attend choir members' social events.

**Friends** are currently asked to pay a minimum of £70 pa and receive all the benefits listed above. This amounts to only a few pounds more than the cost of the best seat price for all three concerts but in most cases also allows the Society to claim a Gift Aid refund from HM Revenue and Customs.

**Patrons** are those supporters who feel they would like to donate a little more than the basic Friends subscription, and make a contribution between £100 and £200, whilst those contributing over £200 are classed as Gold Patrons. Gold Patrons receive two free tickets rather than one.

*Unless they ask not to be included, the names of Friends and Patrons are listed in our concert programmes in recognition of their support to the society.*

**Sponsors** are particularly valued; normally local commercial entities, they are invited to contribute to the costs of staging concerts in return for exposure on all our publicity material - including posters, flyers, programmes, and our website. Although we have some guidelines, terms are flexible and negotiated with individual sponsors. Sponsors for recent seasons have included Burfields House Wealth Management, John Lewis at Home, Hotel du Vin and Fenwick Elliott. We can also offer advertising space in our programmes; rates are negotiable - especially for smaller local businesses.

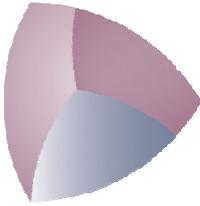
**RTWCS is a registered charity - no 273310.**

### More information

Anyone who would like more information or would like to become a Friend or Patron is asked to contact Gerald Chew by telephone (01892 527958) or by email to [geraldchew@uwclub.net](mailto:geraldchew@uwclub.net).

If you know or represent a company or organisation that may be interested in becoming a Sponsor, or willing to place an advertisement in a future programme, please contact our publicity officer Melissa Richards by email to [publicity@rtwcs.org.uk](mailto:publicity@rtwcs.org.uk).

Further information is on our website [www.rtwcs.org.uk](http://www.rtwcs.org.uk).



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## Interested in singing with RTWCS? – Why not give us a try!

We welcome enquiries from potential new members of the society, whether experienced or not. We do not hold auditions, and we always give newcomers the opportunity to join one or two rehearsals before deciding whether they wish to become a member.

If you wish to give us a try, please telephone our registrar (Jane Walters) on 01892 543158 or the general secretary (Trevor Hurrell) on 07770 823104. Alternatively visit the membership section of our website:

**[www.rtwcs.org.uk](http://www.rtwcs.org.uk)**



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# ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHORAL SOCIETY

## Forthcoming Events

### Informal Christmas Concert

St Mary's Parish Church Goudhurst

Sunday December 14<sup>th</sup> at 6.30pm

### Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas!

Excerpts from Handel's *Messiah*  
Traditional audience and choir carols  
with

The Mayfield Band - Jeffrey Gray (*organ*)

Michael White (*baritone*) - Emily Steventon (*soprano*)

Conductor **Rebecca Miller**



National  
Trust

RTWCS will also be singing Carols at Chartwell on 20th and 21st December  
See the National Trust publicity for details

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**Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2015 at 3 pm - in the Assembly Hall Theatre**

**J.S. Bach**

### ***St Matthew Passion***

Set for soloists, double choir and orchestra, this moving oratorio relates the story of "The Passion of Our Lord according to St Matthew" and is interspersed with moving arias, choruses and chorales.



It is arguably Bach's greatest choral work.

*First performed in Tunbridge Wells by the choir in 1907, it has since been repeated many times, but this will be our first performance since 1996.*

Conductor Rebecca Miller

For further up-to-date details, please visit our website at

**[www.rtwcs.org.uk](http://www.rtwcs.org.uk)**