



ELGAR

THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS

PARRY

I WAS GLAD
BLEST PAIR OF SIRENS
JERUSALEM

ROBERT MURRAY **tenor**
VICTORIA SIMMONDS **mezzo-soprano**
GARY GRIFFITHS **baritone**
SOMERSET CHAMBER CHOIR
BERLINER KANTOREI
SOUTHERN SINFONIA
GRAHAM CALDBECK **conductor**




SATURDAY 26 JULY 2014, WELLS CATHEDRAL at 7pm

PROGRAMME

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Somerset Chamber Choir | Registered charity no. 1003687



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 **WELLS MUSIC**
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Happy birthday Somerset Chamber Choir!



Welcome to our 30th birthday party! We are delighted that our very special invited guests, our loyal choir 'Friends' and everyone here tonight could join us for this occasion. As if that weren't enough of a nucleus for a wonderful party, the BERLINER KANTOREI have travelled from Berlin to celebrate with us too ... their 'return match' for an excellent time some of us enjoyed singing with them when they hosted us last autumn. This concert comes at the end of a week which their party of singers and supporters have spent staying in and sampling the delights of Somerset; we hope their experience has been a memorable one and we wish them *bon voyage* for their journey home.

Ten years of singing together in the 1970s and 1980s under the inspirational direction of the late W. Robert Tullett, founder conductor of the Somerset Youth Choir, welded a disparate group of young people drawn from schools across Somerset, into a close-knit group of friends who had discovered the huge pleasure of making music together and who developed a passion for choral music that they wanted to share. The Somerset Chamber Choir was founded in 1984 when several members who had become too old to be classed as "youths" left the Youth Choir and, with the approval of Somerset County Council, drew together other like-minded singers from around the County. Blessed with a variety of complementary skills, a small steering group set about developing a balanced choir and appointed a conductor, accompanist and management team. Although we were keen to share our new-found love of music-making and maintain the close friendships that we had made, little did we know that what we had created would endure, prosper and develop over the next thirty years.

There have been so many memorable performances of some of the finest choral music ever written and we are deeply grateful for the commitment of our members, many of whom travel huge distances to sing with us, our management team and Trustees who have served us so well for so many years, to our past conductors but especially our current Musical Director Graham Caldbeck who has conducted us since 1991 and under whose baton we have enjoyed working with an astonishing array of world-class performers and professional musicians.

We are deeply appreciative of the support given by Friends of Somerset Chamber Choir and by you our audience who have supported our work from the outset. Performing to full venues has been our privilege and joy.


During these thirty years so many things have moved on ... technology for a start and now all our choir members (and many of our choir Friends) receive vital communication and news via e-mail, text, Facebook and Twitter. One thing that we hope we never change though is our unabated passion for the performance of wonderful music in this wonderful County of Somerset ... the continued membership of many choir founders is our testament thus far ... and hope that for many years to come, we and our successors will continue to encourage many to become involved in singing and all to discover the rich choral musical heritage that we often take for granted.

Now, let's get this party started and enjoy our birthday feast of fantastic English choral music. What will be our traditional birthday wish? That's easy, it's that this and all the other choral delights out there will endure not only for the next thirty years but forever! If we have anything to do with it, they most certainly will.

ADRIAN MALE and LIN WINSTON

Our other memorable birthday 'cards' ...

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MASS IN C MINOR
Bruckner
MASS IN E MINOR
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Somerset Chamber Choir
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HANDEL
Dettingen Te Deum
JAMES MACMILLAN
Christus vincit
BRITTEN
Hymn to St Cecilia
Emma Kirkby soprano
Elizabeth Watts soprano
James Bowman countertenor
Andrew Kennedy tenor
Peter Harvey bass
Håkan Ekenäs baritone
CANZONA (Thomas Cavallini)
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PROGRAMME
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If you would like to see your name in our programmes and help support high quality music-making in Somerset why not become a Friend of Somerset Chamber Choir? Our popular Friends Scheme has five membership levels, each giving a different range of benefits.

All members receive:

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- Twice-yearly newsletter and free mailing of advance publicity
- Invitation for you and your guests to post-concert drinks with the choir
- The opportunity to get the best seats in the house with an exclusive priority booking period

In addition, members of the upper levels of the scheme receive superb additional benefits – Best Friends and Great Friends also get **free or discounted concert tickets** for themselves and their guests, as well as free concert programmes, for example.

The subscription levels start from just £10 per annum, so you can choose the level of support that suits you best – whichever level you choose, rest assured that each and every Friend is equally important to us.

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online at our website:

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After the concert, the choir looks forward to meeting members of the Friends Scheme and their guests in Wells Town Hall, located in nearby Market Place.

Programme order

HUBERT PARRY (1848-1918)

I was glad (1902) Orchestrated by Peter Lawson Somerset Chamber Choir ~~	7'
Blest Pair of Sirens (1887) Berliner Kantorei & Somerset Chamber Choir ~~	11'
Jerusalem (1916) Orchestrated by Elgar [1922] Everyone present	3'

~~~ SHORT INTERVAL ~~~

## EDWARD ELGAR (1857-1934)

### The Dream of Gerontius, Op.38

|                                                                                                                                            |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <b>Part I</b><br>Gerontius (tenor)<br>The Priest (bass)<br>Assistants (chorus)                                                             | 37' |
| ~~~ INTERVAL (10 MINUTES) ~~~                                                                                                              |     |
| <b>Part II</b><br>Soul of Gerontius (tenor)<br>Angel (mezzo-soprano)<br>Angel of the Agony (bass)<br>Demons, Angelicals and Souls (chorus) | 55' |

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special SCC welcome to our invited guests ...

The Dean and Chapter and Staff of Wells Cathedral who make it possible for us to use this beautiful building for our annual concerts ... we have not missed a year since 1994!

The High Sheriff of Somerset, RICHARD LLOYD and his wife JANE

The Mayor of Wells, Cllr CHRIS BRITON with the Mayoress MRS SARAH BRITON

The Mayor of Taunton Deane, Cllr DAVE DURDAN with the Mayoress MRS RENEE DURDAN

Apologies from ELIZABETH, LADY GASS, the Lord Lieutenant of Somerset, a long-time supporter of the choir, who is unfortunately tied up with a previous engagement today but already has the date of our next concert in her diary! She sends the choir this message ...

*"Congratulations to the Somerset Chamber Choir on reaching this significant milestone. I do hope you have a wonderful evening and send my best wishes to you all, not just for tonight, but for all your future ventures"*

~~~

We are very grateful for the support we receive from our Patrons, Dame Emma Kirkby & Sir David Willcocks, and Vice-Presidents Adrian Male, Chris Cutting and Anthony Leigh.

Programme notes compiled and written by Graham Caldbeck.

Printed music for this concert has been provided by Somerset Libraries Arts & Information Service.



Somerset Chamber Choir - Registered Charity number 1003687

www.somersetchamberchoir.org.uk

Patrons: Dame Emma Kirkby, Sir David Willcocks. Vice Presidents: Chris Cutting, Anthony Leigh, Adrian Male



Please note that photography (with or without flash) and/or recording of any sort during the performance is forbidden without the prior written consent of the Dean and Chapter and Somerset Chamber Choir

The right is reserved, without incurring liability, to substitute artists and to vary the programme for reasons beyond our control, although these details are correct at the time of going to print.

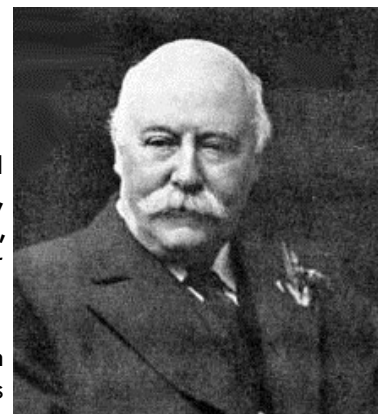
Programme notes

Sir Hubert Parry (1848 - 1918)

I was glad

Choral music is of central importance in Parry's output. While most of his instrumental works have, at least for the present, lapsed into a sometimes undeserved obscurity, pieces such as his setting of Blake's *Jerusalem*, and the coronation anthem *I was glad*, remain at the very heart of the English choral repertoire, their nobility of character being discovered afresh by each generation.

This anthem, written for the coronation of Edward VII in Westminster Abbey on August 9th 1902, is an outstanding example of Parry's mastery of choral sonorities and textures. The brilliant illumination of individual words is matched by Parry's impressive ability to build an overarching and musically balanced structure.



The words from Psalm 122 are traditionally sung at the entrance of the Sovereign. Over sixty years had elapsed since Victoria's Coronation, so it is hardly surprising that the elaborate ceremonial did not go entirely without a hitch. For some reason the signal indicating that the King had arrived was given prematurely, and *I was glad* was sung before the procession could begin. Consequently it had to be sung a second time—a rare distinction for a 'first performance'!

The Coronation Choir consisted of some 430 men and boys, divided into Decani and Cantoris and placed on specially erected galleries in the north and south choir aisles. Since some of the singers could not see the conductor (Sir Frederick Bridge), sub-conductors were placed at strategic points to 'relay' the beat. With such a disposition of the singers, the double-choir writing which Parry used for '*Jerusalem is builded ...*' must have been particularly effective.

[Based upon a programme note by John Heighway]

I was glad when they said unto me,
We will go into the house of the Lord.
Our feet shall stand in thy gates, O Jerusalem.
Jerusalem is builded as a city that is at unity in itself.
O pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
they shall prosper that love thee.
Peace be within thy walls,
and plenteousness within thy palaces.

Psalm 122:1-3, 6, 7

Blest Pair of Sirens

Parry's *Blest Pair of Sirens* was composed for and commissioned by Stanford's Bach Choir in 1887, the year of Queen Victoria's golden jubilee. Its noble treatment of Milton's poetry stands out as a landmark in the development of the English choral tradition. Parry was rooted in the English church tradition but this work reveals his characteristic openness to the modern influences of his day, and especially to the genius and techniques of Brahms. He treats Milton's Ode with athletic, thrusting, diatonic themes and strongly develops them through energetic counterpoint spread in a masterly manner over 8-part choir and full orchestra. The orchestral introduction recalls harmonic progressions in the Overture to Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*, which had been premièred in 1868, almost twenty years previously. Stanford was one of the first English musicians to recognise Parry's talent and hailed him as the greatest English composer since Purcell.

Parry's music was also much valued by his fellow composers. Elgar admired it and there is no doubt that his own ceremonial style, with its nobility and loftiness, owed something to a similar vein in Parry. When Elgar, in a lecture at Birmingham University on March 16th, 1905, expressed a wish to see in English music "*something broad, noble, chivalrous, healthy, and above all, an out-of-door sort of spirit*", *Blest Pair of Sirens* was just the kind of music he had in mind, as a note in the draft for this lecture clearly testified.

There may be a temptation to think of Parry as belonging to the generation before Elgar's, but he was in fact only nine years older than Elgar and they may therefore be regarded as contemporaries. However, Parry's background

and education differed markedly from Elgar's. Parry, formed by the squirearchy, Eton and Oxford, was well launched into his career by the year 1880, when Elgar was still an unknown struggling organist and violinist in Worcester. Later, Elgar played in the orchestra of the Three Choirs Festival in performances of Parry's works. Michael Kennedy has written, '*With certain reservations, Elgar admired Parry's music and there is no doubt that his ceremonial style, with its nobility and loftiness, derived from a similar vein in Parry. Elgar certainly had the highest regard for Blest Pair of Sirens...*'.

Vaughan Williams, who studied composition with Parry at the RCM, agreed with Elgar and wrote: "*I hereby solemnly declare, keeping steadily in view the works of Byrd, Purcell, and Elgar, that Blest Pair of Sirens is my favourite piece of music written by an Englishman.*" Vaughan Williams's admiration of the work is testified by the fact that, when he retired as conductor of the Bach Choir in 1928, Parry's work closed his final concert. Near the end of his life, in May 1957, Vaughan Williams conducted the work at Haddo House, near Aberdeen. In her biography of RVW, his wife,

Blest pair of Sirens, pledges of Heaven's joy,
Sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse,
Wed your divine sounds, and mixt power employ,
Dead things with inbreathed sense able to pierce;
And to our high-raised phantasy present
That undisturbed song of pure concent,
Aye sung before the sapphire-coloured throne
To Him that sits thereon,
With saintly shout and solemn jubilee;
Where the bright Seraphim, in burning row,
Their loud, uplifted angel-trumpets blow,
And the Cherubic host in thousand quires
Touch their immortal harps of golden wires,
With those just spirits, that wear victorious palms,

Hymns devout and holy psalms
Singing everlastingly.
That we on Earth with undiscording voice,
May rightly answer that melodious noise;
As once we did, till disproportioned sin
Jarr'd against Nature's chime, and with harsh din
Broke the fair music that all creatures made
To their great Lord, whose love their motion swayed
In perfect diapason, whilst they stood
In first obedience, and their state of good.
O may we soon again renew that song
And keep in tune with Heaven, till God ere long
To His celestial concert us unite,
To live with Him and sing in endless morn of light.

Ursula, commented, '*It was, he always said, his favourite English Choral work...*'.
John Milton (1608-74)

Jerusalem

Parry's setting of William Blake's Jerusalem would seem, on the face of it, to be entirely characteristic of the composer's 'public' image. Yet there is something rather more revealing about this choice of text. Its popular associations of national pride belie the passionate anger within Blake's poem. These are the words of an idealist and radical which must have exerted a powerful attraction to a man of Parry's convictions. Its first performance took place at a 'Fight for Right' meeting at the Queen's Hall on 28 March 1916. Since then, the hymn has gradually become an additional, unofficial national anthem for many people in this country, sung at weddings, funerals, memorial services, Women's Institute meetings and, of course, during the Last Night of the Proms.

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the Holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?
And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark Satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold:
Bring me my arrows of desire:
Bring me my spear: O clouds unfold!
Bring me my Chariot of Fire.
I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

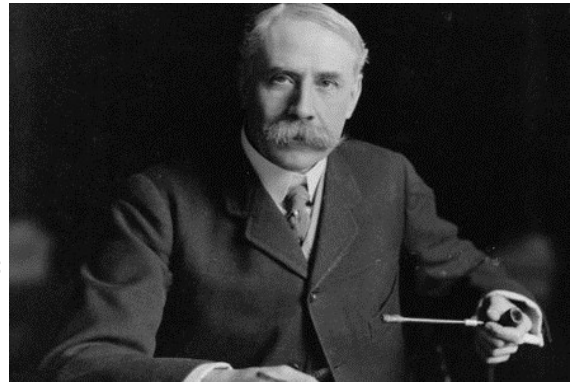
William Blake (1757-1827)

~~~ SHORT INTERVAL ~~~

Sir Edward Elgar (1857 - 1934)

## The Dream of Gerontius

**Faith, doubt, transcendence: the text and context of J.H. Newman's poetic drama *The Dream of Gerontius***



*The Dream of Gerontius* first began as a written work, a 'poetic drama', only part of which was subsequently set by Elgar. It was created in 1865 by John Henry Newman (later Cardinal Newman, and since 2010 venerated by the Roman Catholic Church as Blessed). In the mid-nineteenth century Newman was perhaps the best-known English Catholic thinker and author, respected by many but deeply mistrusted by others. This was a period of rapid and far-reaching changes in the intellectual life of Victorian society, and Newman himself influenced and was influenced by these powerful currents. In writing *The Dream of Gerontius* he exposed his own doubts and examined his religious faith.

Newman's life (1801-1890) spanned almost the entire nineteenth century. Baptised and raised as an Anglican Christian, he studied at Oxford University and then became a Fellow of Oriel College and Vicar of the University Church of St. Mary (where Matthew Arnold, the poet, critic and social commentator, also later a Fellow of Oriel, listened to his sermons). Newman became renowned, and is remembered, as the best-known proponent of the 'Oxford Movement' which from the early 1830s sought to reform the Church of England and draw it back into union with the Roman Catholic Church. Newman's publications in support of this aim were highly controversial and in 1843 he ceased preaching as an Anglican. Two years afterwards, he finally converted to Catholicism, having brought himself to reconcile his idealised view of the early Roman Church with its embodiment as a contemporary institution (famously remarking, "I drink to Conscience first, and to the Pope second"). He continued to explore his theological and spiritual struggles in his published writings.

Newman was frequently attacked by other contemporary thinkers, but such disagreements were more than just obscure academic debates. They were at the heart of public discourse. Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, his spiritual autobiography, was serialised in the press in 1864 in reply to accusations of untruthfulness by Charles Kingsley. Kingsley (best known today perhaps as the author of the children's fable *The Water Babies*) was an Anglican clergyman, novelist and Regius Professor of History at the University of Cambridge, and had been one of the first to welcome the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. Darwin's work provided compelling evidence for the theory of evolution, and in doing so began a process which would undermine the certainty of previous generations in the literal truth of the Bible. This was the turbulent background against which Newman's *Dream* was produced. Small wonder, then, that Newman's poetic drama is a mass of inherent contradictions: a description of what is ineffable, a statement of faith encompassing dread and uncertainty. Yet the text of the *Dream* is not merely of historical interest. Even to modern readers, it remains compelling for a number of reasons.

Above all, despite its title *The Dream of Gerontius* is not a dream. At the end of Part I, its protagonist dies.

This is an unusual proposition for drama. Very few other dramatic or fictional works follow their main character into a personal afterlife, even when dealing with immortality. Classical myths and legends are chiefly concerned with visits of the living to the realm of the dead. Dante enters the Inferno as a commentator and observer. Milton, of whose great works Newman must have been aware, "justifies the ways of God to Man" in *Paradise Lost* from the (Protestant) perspective of an abstract narrator. And of course the *Dream's* eponymous main character is Newman's own invention. As a result, no helpful expectations are aroused by his name: 'Gerontius' carries none of the resonance or relative familiarity of a Biblical figure (unlike, say, Elijah) nor of a legendary one (unlike Parsifal or Faust). 'Gerontius' simply means 'Elder' or 'Old Man'. Such lack of context, as well as the total absence of any biography in the poem, turns the character into an Everyman. The account of his experience does not depend on his individual life history.

This account goes where even Shakespeare feared, imaginatively, to tread. Hamlet, in the most famous soliloquy of all, wonders fearfully "in that sleep of death, what dreams may come..."? Perhaps Newman's choice of title consciously or unconsciously indicates that this *Dream* was intended as a bold and faith-inspired answer to that terrifying question. Yet the work does not contain a clear, reassuring affirmation of faith. There is nothing in *The Dream of Gerontius* (neither the poem, nor Elgar's setting) equivalent to the moment of certainty represented by "I know that my Redeemer liveth" in Handel's *Messiah*, or by J. S. Bach's triumphant setting of "Et resurrexit" in the *Mass in B Minor*. The vision of life immediately after death which the *Dream* presents is a complex and troubling one, shot through with glimpses (no more) of a deity and a heaven which are as agonising as they are ecstatic.

Even some of Newman's best known words from the *Dream* (which have been set not only by Elgar but by other composers, as the hymns "Firmly I believe and truly" and "Praise to the Holiest in the height") are far from being



unequivocal. In context, neither of these passages has a message as simple as the familiar hymns might suggest. Within the *Dream*, "Firmly I believe and truly" is the litany recited by Gerontius close to his own end, at the conclusion of Part I. But it is framed by Latin words echoing those of Psalm 130, a cry of alienation and fear: "De profundis oro te." ("Out of the depths I pray to Thee"). Gerontius in his extremity clings to the familiar and doctrinally correct statement of his beliefs, but it does not entirely console him. He feels himself to be upon "the dizzy brink of some sheer infinite descent", on the point of annihilation: "That masterful negation and collapse/Of all that makes me man". Although he departs peacefully, in the process of dying he is not immune to fear, perceiving the "fierce restless fright" of something wicked, "some bodily form of ill". There is a psychological honesty about the writing here which lifts the use of the litany beyond mere dogma, and gives the death of Gerontius much of its compelling drama.

Part II is concerned with the onward journey of Gerontius after death. He becomes no longer a person with a name, but a Soul accompanied by a guardian Angel, with whom the Soul converses (in a manner reminiscent of earlier didactic religious works such as the mediaeval *Piers Plowman* or Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*). The terror which Gerontius felt on the threshold of death has, the Soul tells the Angel, now left him. According to the Angel, "It is because/Then thou didst fear, that now thou dost not fear." However, Gerontius, though clearly not an unredeemed sinner, cannot enjoy automatic redemption as he would if he were a saint. The prayers of the Priest and Assistants on earth, and the intercession of the Angel of the Agony in heaven, as well as his own (far from certain) faith, are all needed to safeguard his Soul from the Demons and damnation. (Incidentally though it may be archaic in expression, the cynicism of the Demons seems remarkably modern: "Virtue and Vice, A knave's pretence, 'Tis all the same. . .")

Thus protected, the Soul progresses toward judgement. But still in Newman's vision there is no easily consoling Heaven to bring closure. The voices of the heavenly host, in the great refrain "Praise to the Holiest" which recurs throughout Part II, are heard by the Soul only incompletely and from afar as it approaches the judgement seat. The same refrain accompanies the Soul (with exhortations to praise "in the height, and in the depth") into the purgatory which the Soul must undergo, before (the Angel promises) it will eventually be received fully into the eternal Presence.

Such personifications as the Soul, Demons and Angels may seem quaint, but these figures were used by Newman as a means to engage with concepts which (even or perhaps especially for those who do possess deep religious faith) often prove difficult if not impossible to express. Moreover by positing the survival of individual consciousness after death, Newman could address abstractions such as judgement, atonement and redemption, and bring them to vivid imaginative life. Newman's writing throughout the *Dream* generally takes an approach of direct expression and apparent simplicity (in contrast with the work of his acolyte, the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins), giving the drama extraordinary power in itself and providing the strong foundation for Elgar's magnificent, whole-hearted musical setting. And ultimately although Newman's life and work were beset by doubt and intellectual struggle, the central message of the whole piece is a simple one. It can perhaps be summed up in its author's resoundingly powerful exhortation:

"Prepare to meet thy God."

Jane Reed - 16<sup>th</sup> June 2014

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Background and history

Cardinal Newman's poem *The Dream of Gerontius* was a well-known and much-loved work in its own right by the time Elgar came to set it to music in 1900. It had been translated into French and German and was reprinted during Newman's lifetime. It achieved further notoriety when General Gordon was killed at the Siege of Khartoum (to the shock of the nation and the fury of Queen Victoria, who blamed Gladstone for the delay in the dispatch of a relieving force) leaving behind a copy with personal annotations that were then copied by admirers. Elgar, who incidentally had wanted to write a 'Gordon' Symphony in 1899 but never embarked seriously on the project, had owned a copy of Newman's poem since 1885 and he was given a further copy as a wedding present in 1889.

Elgar's theme for the projected Gordon Symphony was incorporated into *Gerontius* as the chorus, 'Go forth' at the end of Part I.

In early 1900 the composer set about preparing a libretto for *Gerontius*, later revealing that the poem had been "soaking in my mind for at least eight years". Newman's poem falls into seven sections: the first is a prologue on earth showing the dying dreamer surrounded by priests and assistants, and the other six parts trace the Soul's progress through Judgement to Purgatory. Newman's poem has a total of 900 lines, and these needed cutting to be manageable for a musical setting. Elgar retained most of the prologue to form his Part I, and he cut down the rest to 300 lines to form his Part II. This formed a balanced libretto in two parts, and was Elgar's shortest libretto to date for a full-scale work. This meant there was a new dramatic contrast between the two states of life and death as

presented in the two parts of the work, and also that the words now wouldn't confine the music but gave Elgar a flexible framework on which to develop his musical tapestry.

It is important to remember that in 1900 Elgar had been struggling for recognition for years, and had only recently enjoyed his first major success when the *Enigma Variations* were premiered and instantly lauded in 1899. He thus came to *The Dream of Gerontius* with a new assurance and he worked steadily on it through the first half of 1900, finishing the full score on 3rd August. The premiere was to take place in Birmingham in October, and there was consequently very little time for the choral parts to be prepared and the chorus to learn the music. The Birmingham Festival Chorus Master who had prepared the choir for *King Olaf* a few years earlier and was thus familiar with Elgar's compositional style, had died suddenly in June. Because the choir had a break during the summer months, there was even less time for them to prepare. In addition, the complicated process of proof reading the parts was compounded because the publisher would not go to the expense of having the full score copied: there were just ten days for the conductor Hans Richter to learn the score.

The premiere on 3rd October 1900 was therefore under-rehearsed and somewhat chaotic. It was naturally not to Elgar's satisfaction and there was a tepid response from the critics. Shortly afterwards Elgar wrote, "*I always said God was against art... I have allowed my heart to open once - it is now shut against every religious feeling and every soft, gentle impulse forever.*" This was perhaps pessimistic and overdramatic, but it does show how he felt about his work: earlier that year he wrote, "*I've written it out of my insides inside*" and at the end of the score he had copied a quotation from Ruskin "*This is the best of me...this I saw and knew: this, if anything of mine, is worth your memory*": his disappointment was understandable. Elgar shared a constant correspondence with his publisher and great friend Jaeger throughout the conception of the work: Jaeger had written in May "*You must not, cannot expect this work of yours to be appreciated by the ordinary amateur (or critic!) after one hearing*". It was another German, Julius Butts the Director of the North Rhein Festival, who exceeded Jaeger's expectations: he heard the premiere and organised further performances in Düsseldorf for the following two seasons. Richter conducted the work again in 1903 with the Hallé in Manchester, and the piece's reputation grew gradually from these early outings into the towering status it enjoys today as a cornerstone of the choral repertoire.

For the first performance Jaeger wrote an analysis of the score that contained many insights into the meaning of the musical fabric. With the composer's approval, he labelled Elgar's musical motives, or short melodic ideas, and set about explaining their genesis through the piece. The orchestral prelude begins with hushed strings presenting the '**Judgement**' theme. Even more tonally ambiguous is the '**Fear**' theme that rises through the hushed strings with each part in a different, unrelated key. This leads into the '**Prayer**' theme, closely related in melodic style to chant, and then immediately Elgar transforms the 'Fear' theme into a repetitive figure in the bass, over which he lays '**Sleep**' which he characterised as "*lying down weary and distressed*". As the bass ostinato continues, we hear a descending melody ('**Miserere**') and then immediately a chromatically aspiring melody which somehow always falls down again: '**Despair**'. All of this material is combined and transformed, suggesting Gerontius's loneliness and the challenge of his journey to come, until we reach a sequence ('**Committal**') in which Elgar uses a broad melody to build to the prelude's climax. After this the music ebbs away leaving the 'Judgement' theme alone again once more, whereupon we hear the first utterance of the mortally ill Gerontius.

As the orchestral prelude ends, it is important to remember that the orchestra is not hereafter relegated to second place after an initial showpiece 'overture' style, but it begins on equal footing with the singers, as expressive partner and dramatic commentator. Further to the achievement of synthesising this orchestral and motivic development style of Wagner with his own harmonic idiom, in *The Dream of Gerontius* Elgar developed a technique of writing for the soloist that allowed a clear understanding but musically flexible setting of the text. From this moment in the piece, Newman's text at the same time defines and inspires the composer's melody because of the speech rhythms of the poetry. From his sketches, we can deduce that the composer worked tirelessly at capturing the very essence of the verse in his musical notes, and in the resulting *arioso* recitative music.

The chorus play a variety of roles throughout the piece, initially as Gerontius' friends praying at his bedside, and later as Demons and Angelicals, and these are essential in portraying the universality of Newman's theme. On that matter it is of note that the name 'Gerontius' is never actually sung in the piece (leading to an unresolvable debate as to the name's pronunciation!) This specific omission must also contribute to the universality of the character which Elgar envisaged: "*I imagined Gerontius to be a man like us, not a Priest or a Saint, but a sinner, a repentant one of course but still no end of a worldly man in his life, and now brought to book. Therefore I have not filled his part with Church tunes and rubbish but a good, full-blooded romantic, remembered worldliness...*"

It is significant that Elgar chose to set the part of the Angel for a female singer: this would have been justifiable simply as a contrast in tessitura from the other roles, but through her guiding of the Soul during Part II, Elgar wrote his greatest love duet which has echoes both of maternal guidance and of marital tenderness. Briefly preceded by an echo of bedside prayer from Part I, Gerontius's glimpse of God is an unforgettable musical moment for the uninitiated listener. It is perhaps surprising to note that Elgar was persuaded at a very late stage to include it, at the insistence of

Jaeger: after initial concerns of it being vulgar, when Elgar was finally convinced he wrote to his friend that "of course, it's *biggity-big!*". The burial service prayers led by the Priest at Gerontius's passing at the end of Part I are mirrored by the Angel of the Agony towards the end of Part II with the eternal prayers for 'souls which are so dear to thee': both are awesome figures and add a liturgical solemnity to the musical proceedings. The second is followed by the Angel's farewell, during which Elgar pulls together all of his musical material as the Soul passes into Purgatory. We hear the Psalm 'Lord thou hast been our refuge', and then echoes from the earlier hymn 'Praise to the Holiest' and the Angelicals' music, before the ambiguous tonality of the very opening of the piece is settled, and the key D major emerges on 'Amen' with a rising, heavenward melody in the strings.

Based partly upon a May 2003 note by **James Burton** for the Aylesbury Choral Society, and gratefully acknowledged.

Other comments by contemporary music critics

Michael Kennedy has written, 'The musical idiom of *Gerontius* is familiar to us today, but imagine how revolutionary it must have seemed to the first audience. Yet Elgar was not an avant-garde composer. He was fortunate in having a particularly individual tone of voice but he belongs to the world of Brahms, Wagner, Saint-Saëns, Gounod and, among his contemporaries, Richard Strauss. But no English religious choral work had ever sounded so operatic, so much like a tone-poem, as the first part of *Gerontius*. In Part II there is the ecstatic hymn of the Angelicals, 'Praise to the holiest in the height', and the snarling, dissonant Demons' Chorus which gave the Birmingham choir such trouble in 1900. Nothing like it had been heard in British choral music.'

Diana McVeigh - *Elgar The Music Maker* (2007):

'...It [*The Dream of Gerontius*] is the meeting point of the English and German Romantic movements, to be set alongside Schumann's, Liszt's and Busoni's Faust music (respectively, 1853, 1857 & 1916-24); Wagner's *Parsifal* (1882); Mahler's *Resurrection Symphony* (1894) and *Eighth Symphony* (1906); and Strauss's *Tod und Verklärung* (1889).'

'... *Gerontius* has a special place and importance, not only in Elgar's output, but in music in England. It is one of the great spiritual adventures of Romantic art. As a sacred music drama, it ranks with Verdi's *Requiem* (1874), *Parsifal* (1882) and the [Stravinsky's] *Symphony of Psalms* (1930).'

Stephen Johnson has written in a note for a performance by the late Sir Colin Davis, 'Elgar learnt an important lesson from Wagner – though as with every influence on *Gerontius*, he digested it so thoroughly that the listener only hears authentic Elgar. Before Wagner, operas and oratorios tended to be arranged in 'numbers' – arias, duets, ensembles, choruses – all more or less detachable from the larger dramatic context. Wagner found a way of making dramatic works evolve continuously, seamlessly, like huge symphonies. Elgar achieves something very similar in *The Dream of Gerontius*'...More than a century after *Gerontius* was almost denied entry to Worcester Cathedral, this music is now loved by Christians of many denominations, as well as by music-lovers with no particular faith. Even without faith, one can still be moved by Elgar's heartfelt expression of loss and hope in the face of death: 'Farewell, but not for ever!'

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### **The Dream of Gerontius – a thoroughly English work, or a brilliant Anglo-German synthesis?**

Peter Ackroyd - *Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination*:

'If ... Englishness in music can be encapsulated in words at all, those words would probably be: ostensibly familiar and commonplace, yet deep and mystical as well as lyrical, melodic, melancholic, and nostalgic yet timeless.'

Elgar, quoting John Ruskin, written on the last page of the completed score of *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.'

Elgar confiding to a friend:

'It was written 'from my insidest inside.'

Elgar in a letter to a friend, Nicholas Kilburn:

'I think you will find *Gerontius* far beyond anything that I've yet done – I like it – I am not suggesting that I've risen to the heights of the poem for one moment – but on our hillside night after night – I've seen in thought the Soul go up, and have written my own heart's blood into the score.'

Jaeger (Elgar's publisher and friend – Nimrod in the *Enigma Variations*) in a letter to Elgar about the Angel of the Agony section:

'I have not seen or heard anything since 'Parsifal' that has stirred me, & spoken to me with the trumpet tongue of genius as has this part of your latest, & by far greatest work.'

Although Elgar (1857-1934) worked firmly within conventional 19<sup>th</sup>-century German harmonic and structural traditions, his voice is widely considered in this country to be quintessentially English. At the same time, the actual musical language that Elgar employs is German-Romantic, rather than that of the English-folk style taken up by Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) or Holst (1874-34). Incidentally, RVW attended the premiere of *Gerontius*.

In his note for the *BBC Proms Guide to Great Choral Works* (2004), Stephen Johnson has written, 'As *Gerontius* goes to be 'consumed, yet quicken'd, by the glance of God', there is an awe-inspiring crescendo; then the full orchestra, with organ and four percussionists, delivers a lacerating *Parsifal*-like discord – but only for a split second: Elgar marks it fffz-p. The effect is like a blinding flash of light, infinitesimally brief, but one which leaves the eyes and brain reeling. Even the supremely egotistic Wagner would have had to acknowledge Elgar's mastery here.'

The premiere was given in Birmingham Town Hall on 3 October 1900, conducted by Hans Richter (1843-1916), the renowned Austro-Hungarian conductor who had so successfully launched the *Enigma Variations* the year before.

Richter had become associated with Richard Wagner (1813-83) in the 1860s, and in 1876 was chosen to conduct the first complete performance of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at the Bayreuth Festspielhaus. A year later, in 1877, Richter assisted the ailing Wagner as conductor of a major series of six Wagner concerts in London. From then on he became a familiar feature of English musical life, appearing at many choral festivals including as principal conductor of the Birmingham Triennial Music Festival (1885–1909) and directing the Hallé Orchestra (1899–1911) and the newly formed London Symphony Orchestra (1904–1911). In Europe Richter's work was chiefly based in Vienna, where, transcending the bitter division between the followers of Wagner and those of Brahms (1833-97), he concentrated upon the works of Brahms himself, Bruckner (1824-96) and Dvořák (1841-1904); he also continued to work regularly at Bayreuth. In Britain, besides the music of these composers, the other living composers whose works he introduced to British audiences included Tchaikovsky (1840-93), Glazunov (1865-1936), Stanford (1852-1924), Parry (1848-1918) and Elgar. For 20 years from 1879 he toured the length and breadth of this country with his Richter Orchestra. Later, Elgar's 1<sup>st</sup> Symphony (1908) was dedicated to him.

The premiere of *The Dream of Gerontius* was a fiasco that left the composer badly shaken. As Stephen Johnson has pointed out, 'As to the music of *Gerontius*, Elgar was a Wagnerian, and for many English concert-goers in 1900, Wagner's was still difficult, morally questionable modern music'. Wagner himself would no doubt have approved of the echoes of his *Tristan und Isolde* and *Parsifal* in Elgar's score, and also of Elgar's boldness in attempting to portray Gerontius's journey after death and encounter with the Almighty. But for many Anglo-Saxons much of this was unpalatable. Initially, English performers and audiences struggled to come to terms with the work's musical language and mystical Catholicism. Some of it was too much even for the experienced Birmingham Festival Choir: the 'Demons' Chorus' and much of the semi-chorus writing came over poorly at the Birmingham premiere (accusations of sabotage were levelled at certain male members of the choir).

Thankfully for everyone, the work's fortunes soon began to change – significantly when *The Dream of Gerontius* was first heard in Germany. It was a German, the choirmaster, Julius Buths (1851-1920) - musical director of the city of Düsseldorf from 1890 and Director of the North Rhein Festival from 1893, who proved to be an important figure in the work's subsequent acceptance. He heard the premiere, along with Otto Lessman (1844-1918), editor of the *Allemagne Musik-Zeitung*. Lessman's eulogistic review was sent to Elgar by Richter's friend, Henry Ettling (a wine merchant from Mainz) to whom Elgar replied on 30 October 1900:

*'I am – I need not say – intensely gratified at being taken seriously & being understood. I wish my own countrymen could do this – but alas! In England this can never be - & I know it.'*

At the British premiere the Wagnerian mezzo-soprano soloist Marie Brema, who appeared regularly at Bayreuth, although born in Liverpool, was half-German. In the German premiere in Düsseldorf on 19 December 1901, the part was sung by Antonie Beel and then the following May by the English mezzo, Muriel Foster. The second performance in May 1902 was programmed as part of the Lower Rhine Festival. The work was performed in a German translation undertaken by Buths himself. *Gerontius* was thus performed in Germany before it was heard in London - the London premiere not being held in Westminster Cathedral until 6 June 1903, conducted by the composer himself.

The German premiere was widely acclaimed. The *Cologne Gazette* said, 'In both parts we meet with beauties of imperishable value. ... Elgar stands on the shoulders of Berlioz, Wagner, and Liszt, from whose influences he has freed himself until he has become an important individuality. He is one of the leaders of musical art of modern times.'

The *Düsseldorfer Volksblatt* wrote, 'A memorable and epoch-making first performance! Since the days of Liszt nothing has been produced in the way of oratorio ... which reaches the greatness and importance of this sacred cantata.'

After the later performance, the *Manchester Guardian* critic, Arthur Johnstone, wrote, 'is it accidental that the preference is given to Strauss among Germans and Elgar among English composers? For those are the men who really carry the torch, and the Germans are not to be deceived in such matters.'



Elgar was delighted, too, writing of the chorus (the Städtische Musikverein) that they were:  
*'very fine and had only commenced work on 11 November. This disproves the idea fostered in Birmingham that my work is too difficult....'*

Elgar was in the audience for both performances in Düsseldorf and after the second performance, Richard Strauss – the leading modernist figure of the age, and, for many, Wagner's direct heir – publicly toasted Elgar:

*'I drink to the success and welfare of the first English progressive musician, Meister Elgar. This greatly pleased Elgar, who considered Strauss to be 'the greatest genius of the age'.*

In Berlin, six months after the second Düsseldorf performance, the Prelude and Angel's Farewell were included in a concert conducted by Busoni. Shortly after that, complete performances were given in Danzig, Darmstadt and Mainz. At this time, there was considerable friction between Britain and Germany. As D. Millar Craig wrote in a BBC programme for a performance of the work on 18 May 1931, *'...though music can generally rise above national jealousies and quarrels, the tribute was all the more remarkable at a time when, at the end of the Boer War, anti-British feeling in Germany was pretty violent'*.

However, as Michael Kennedy has written, *'Elgar was feted and honoured, dined and wine-d by Düsseldorf musicians and painters....he visited Franz Wüllner, director of the Cologne Conservatoire, and father of the tenor Ludwig (who sang Gerontius in the two Düsseldorf performances), who said that he might include Gerontius in his next season'*.

Two years' later, Elgar in turn praised Strauss after he had conducted a concert of his own music in Birmingham on 20 December 1904.

The original conductor, Richter, conducted the work again in 1903 with the Hallé in Manchester, and the piece's reputation grew gradually from these early outings into the towering status it enjoys today. The Chicago, New York and Sydney premieres all took place in 1903, that in Vienna 1905, Paris 1906 and, under Elgar himself, Toronto 1911.

Elgar's close friend and musical confidant August Jaeger was also struck by the work's Wagnerian character and ambitions. While Elgar was still working on the score Jaeger wrote: *'Since Parsifal nothing of this mystic, religious music has appeared to my knowledge that displays the same power and beauty as yours. Like Wagner you seem to grow with your greater, more difficult subjects and I am now most curious and anxious to know how you will deal with that part of the poem where the Soul goes within the presence of the Almighty. There is a subject for you!'*

Jaeger also tried hard to influence Elgar's setting in places, particularly where the soul goes before God.:  
*'Do you know, I wanted to suggest, in a few gloriously great and effulgent orchestral chords, given out by the whole force of the orchestra in its most glorious key, the momentary vision of the Almighty. A few chords!'*

Jaeger ended with a jibe:

*'But I grant you, it wanted a Wagner or a R. Strauss to do that, nobody else could dare attempt it. No!, as I know now, not even E. E.'*

In the end, Elgar did comply with Jaeger's request and challenge, including a new 18-bar section to include the overwhelming glimpse of God described above.

Jaeger also labelled the various '*leitmotifs*' (Judgement, Fear, Prayer, Sleep, Committal and Death) in his analysis for the programme at the first performance, thus emphasising Elgar's Wagnerian approach to the composition. Each of these themes is introduced in the Prelude. In the 1931 BBC programme mentioned above, D. Millar Craig writes, *'The themes on which the Prelude was built reappear, somewhat in the manner of Wagner's leit-motive...'*

The successful performances of Gerontius in Germany created welcome opportunities for Elgar's British contemporaries, too. For example, Parry's *Blest Pair of Sirens* found great success at the Duisberg Festival in May 1903. Jaeger accompanied Parry to this performance and on their return, Elgar wrote to Jaeger, *'I ...rejoice that dear old Parry had a good time with his 'Sirens'.*

Elgar's music was quickly and avidly studied by many European musicians. For example, in 1904 when Ettling visited Fritz Kreisler, he found him *'deep in The Dream of Gerontius, he told me full of enthusiasm for you....'*

As Michael Kennedy has commented, *'These were all continental musicians of a certain type who would immediately recognise the cosmopolitan backbone of Elgar's music, the saturation with the influences, to their ears, of Brahms, Wagner, Dvorák, and Schumann.'*

Yet, despite even being published in German, as *Der Traum des Gerontius* in Butts' translation, performances of this most important post-*Parsifal* work later became a rarity in Germany just as it was being taken to heart back home. Its popularity in Germany did not survive the First World War.

Unperformed by the Berlin Philharmonic since 1967, *Gerontius* returned there in a recent concert of great significance, not under the orchestra's chief, Simon Rattle, but with Daniel Barenboim in his first performance of the work on 20 January 2012. In a review at the time, David Haslett wrote, '*I think this was an important performance, not only in bringing Elgar's masterpiece to a German audience in resplendent form, but also in revealing the work as a restored painting. Everything was approached anew.*'

Perhaps our quintessential Englishman was in reality also very much a European?

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Dream of Gerontius - text

PART I

Gerontius (tenor)

The Priest (bass)

Assistants (chorus and semi-chorus)

Orchestral Prelude

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.
[Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord have mercy.]

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.
Kyrie eleison

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.

Be merciful, be gracious...

Gerontius

Sanctus fortis, Sanctus Deus,
[Holy Strength, Holy God]
De profundis oro te,
[Out of the depths I cry to thee]
Miserere, Judex meus,
[Have mercy, my Judge]
Parce mihi, Domine.
[Spare me, O Lord.]
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.
[at the critical moment of death]

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 hallow'd 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.

[with the Assistants]

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:—

[semi-chorus]

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;
[now is the hour]
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!
[Depart, O Christian soul, from this world!]
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 pour'd 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.

_____ **End of Part I** _____

~~~~~ **INTERVAL (10 Minutes)** ~~~~~

## PART II

*Soul of Gerontius (tenor)*  
*Angel (mezzo-soprano)*  
*Angel of the Agony (bass)*  
*Demons, Angelicals and Souls (chorus)*

### **Soul of Gerontius**

I went to sleep; and now I am refresh'd,  
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: some one 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 worlds 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 wouldst 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 wish'd.

### **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 at 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 forestall'd the agony, and so  
For thee the bitterness of death is past.  
Also, because already in thy soul  
The Judgment 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 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, –  
 Dispossess'd,  
 Aside thrust,  
 Chuck'd 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 lick'd 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; Ha! Ha!

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;  
 And does but aspire  
 To the heaven above  
 With sordid aim,  
 And not from love.  
 Ha! ha!

(Dispossessed.)

(Dispossessed, Aside thrust.)

**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 stamp'd  
 Upon his flesh; and, from the agony  
 Which thrill'd through body and soul in that embrace,  
 Learn that the flame of the Everlasting Love  
 Doth burn ere it transform.

**Choir of Angelicals** [*semi-chorus*]

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

**Angel** [*with the Choir of Angelicals*]

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 will'd to be  
A marvel in His birth:  
Spirit and flesh His parents were;  
His home was heaven and earth.

The Eternal bless'd His child, and arm'd,  
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 pass'd 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.

### **Choir of Angelicals**

Praise to the Holiest in the height.

### **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 their 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 strengthen'd Him, what time He knelt  
Lone in that garden shade, bedew'd 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 sicken'd Thee;  
Jesu! by that pang of heart which thrill'd 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 reign'd 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 of Assistants 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 quicken'd, by the glance of God.  
Alleluia! Praise to His Name!

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.

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.  
Amen.

Softly and gently, dearly ransom'd 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 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.

Lord, Thou hast been our refuge, etc.  
Amen

Praise to the Holiest in the height,  
And in the depth be praise:  
To us His elder race He gave  
To battle and to win,  
Without the chastisement of pain,  
Without the soil of sin.  
Amen.



Manuscript score, signed by Elgar and the performers of the premiere

# Biographies



**SOMERSET CHAMBER CHOIR** was founded in 1984 by former members of the Somerset Youth Choir and is firmly established as one of the most exciting choirs in the area. Known for its innovative and eclectic programmes of music devised by its conductor, Graham Caldbeck, it regularly performs with many of the UK's top professional soloists and orchestras.

Over the past 20 years, the choir has performed with such ensembles as Devon Baroque, His Majestys Sagbutts & Cornetts, London Bach Players, London Baroque, Sarum Chamber Orchestra, Saxploitation, O Duo and Southern Sinfonia. Among the front-rank vocal soloists with whom the choir has appeared are Dame Emma Kirkby, Sophie, Mary

and Ben Bevan, Elizabeth Watts, James Bowman, Tim Mead, Ian Bostridge, Andrew Kennedy, Andrew Staples, Thomas Hobbs, Christopher Maltman, Peter Harvey and Benedict Nelson.

The choir has also performed with an inspiring selection of the UK's most talented solo instrumentalists, including Susan Blair, Anita D'Attellis, Alan George, Rupert Gough, David Miller, Philip Moore, Margaret Phillips, Richard Pearce, Sally Pryce, Charles Ramirez, Christopher Stokes, Andrew West and Naomi Williams.

The choir continues to recruit from among the most talented singers in the region. Many members are now based outside the county – some travelling hundreds of miles to attend its rehearsal weekends, perhaps combining their weekend with a visit to family or friends, a fact that perhaps speaks louder than words.

You can find out all about future concerts, sign up for newsletters, browse the extensive concert archive, learn about joining the choir and lots more at the website: [www.somersetchamberchoir.org.uk](http://www.somersetchamberchoir.org.uk)

## Members of Somerset Chamber Choir

### Soprano

Fran Aggleton  
Victoria Cainen  
Sarah Carter  
Carole Collins  
Susan Crennell  
Julia Dyer  
Rebecca Elderton  
Nerissa Faulkner+  
Kathy Fear+  
Jane Harris  
Helen Lunt+  
Judy Male  
Annabelle Page  
Jane Reed  
Claire Satchwell  
Deborah Shepperd  
Liz Stallard  
Rebecca Tamplin+  
Julie Taylor+  
Linnet Tutcher (guest)  
Rachel Williams\*  
Lin Winston\*

### Alto

Jenny Abraham  
Sylv Arcscott+  
Wendy Baskett+  
Sarah Brandhuber+  
Gay Colbeck

Janice Collins\*  
Sue Day  
Luisa De Gregorio\*+  
Janet Dunnett  
Melanie Dyer  
Esther Edwards  
Joy Fletcher  
Pascale Gillett  
Kate Golding  
Elizabeth Gowers  
Rhiannon Kirk  
Diana van der Klugt  
Hazel Luckwill  
Stephanie Newbury  
Gemma Okell\*  
Helen Peart  
Rachel Pillar+  
Adele Reynolds

### Tenor

Nick Bowditch+  
Dominic Brenton  
Andrew Coombs\*+  
Tim Donaldson+  
Nigel Hobbs  
Peter Mackay  
Adrian Male\*  
Geoff Larbalestier  
(guest)  
Ray Singleton (guest)

Russell Smith  
Robert Tucker+  
Ashley Tutcher (guest)  
Robin Williams\*  
Tom Williams  
Peter Woodward  
(guest)

### Bass

Andrew Bell  
Philip Bevan\*  
John Broad+  
Ian Bromelow  
Simon Bryant  
Michael Cainen  
William Ford-Young  
Robert Fovargue  
Simon Francis+  
Ron Jennings  
Anthony Leigh  
Tim Lewis\*+  
Tony Pitkin  
Benomy Tutcher  
Martin Warren+

### Treasurer

David Hallet\*

\* Denotes Trustee  
+ Denotes semi-chorus

## How can you support the choir?

*You can contribute further to our continuing success by ...*

- coming to our future concerts & bringing your friends
- joining our email list via our website, if you wish to be kept informed about our concerts - this can save us considerable postage costs
- recommending us to talented singers, encouraging them to apply via our website
- offering financial support, large or small! We are a registered charity and receive no public funding. There are a number of ways you can help us:
  - \* would you like to join our Friends Scheme? Read about the benefits you can receive on the Friends page
  - \* would you like to make an individual donation (under gift aid) or a business donation (tax relief and ticket/entertainment packages available) towards a concert?
  - \* would your business consider placing an advert in a concert programme (from just £35)?
  - \* would you or your business offer to do something for us at a discount or gratis (e.g. process some of our publicity mailings through your company post-room, etc)?

If you feel you can help, please contact us via our website [www.somersetchamberchoir.org.uk](http://www.somersetchamberchoir.org.uk)

**Thank you!**



**BERLINER KANTOREI** is one of Berlin's larger accomplished amateur choirs. For more than 30 years the choir has been under the musical direction of conductors belonging to the 'Evangelische Grunewaldgemeinde' (Evangelical Grunewald Church Parish) in Berlin-Wilmersdorf, including Heinrich Poos, Ulrich Bremsteller, Wolfgang Helbich, Cornelius Schneider-Pungs and Uwe Gronostay. Günter Brick became the choir's present musical director in 1990. The choir's repertoire ranges from a *capella* music from all periods, as well as oratorios for church services and concerts.

These include 8 part double chorus works by Schütz and Bach; works by Kodály and Brahms, oratorios such as 'Requiem' by W A Mozart, the Creation by J Haydn; the 'Weihnachtsoratorium' and the 'Matthäus Passion' by J S Bach, the 'Messias' by G F Händel, 'Carmina burana' by C Orff, as well as 'Ein deutsches Requiem' by J Brahms. These performances have taken place in partnership with various groups including: the 'Deutsches Filmorchester Babelsberg', the 'Orchester Berlin Baroque', the 'Orchester Concerto Brandenburg', the 'Schöneberger Kammerorchester', the 'Philharmonischen Orchester Grünberg', the 'Sibelius Orchester', the 'Capella Vitalis Berlin', the 'Berliner Mädchenchor' (girls' choir), as well as the 'Leipziger Philharmonie' in the 'Konzerthaus Berlin'.

Interpretation, voice training and musical development play an important role in the choir's weekly work. The choir usually consists of about 75 singers for Classical music, the Renaissance and Baroque periods. For large-scale projects, such as Romantic and modern music, the choir can be increased to 120 singers.



## Members of BERLINER KANTOREI

### Soprano

Kirsten Bielefeld  
Michela Böhme  
Sabine Bornemann  
Jutta Bosse Jestädt  
Gudrun Demmler  
Rita Frommann  
Christiane Golz-Wehner  
Steffi Gritz-Sowa  
Jasmin Henning  
Almut Jörns  
Gabriele Langmann-  
Spangenberg  
Nicola Liesenklas  
Olga Maier  
Susanne Plietzsch  
Inge Radefeldt

Sabine Seeger-Hezel  
Fine Sowa  
Dorothea Stallmeyer-Thümis  
Marlene Starfinger  
Gunhild Stoffels  
Gudrun Thomaschek  
Kathinka Von Wittenburg  
Ursula Weischedel  
Dagmar Witt  
Angelika Worthmüller

### Alto

Dagmar Balve-Hauff  
Ulrike Burg  
Cornelia Corvinus  
Christine Däumling  
Renate Dettke

Anna Gottberg  
Angelika Haußner  
Gudrun Jeschonnek  
Maren Kögel  
Gunhild Langenbeck-Groh  
Carola Mösch  
Violet Schäfer  
Christa Schliski  
Caroline Thiessen

### Tenor

Günter Brick (Kantor/  
conductor *Berliner Kantorei*)  
Nico Hees  
Benjamin Hohnhäuser  
Manfred Köcher  
Martin Schimmelpfennig

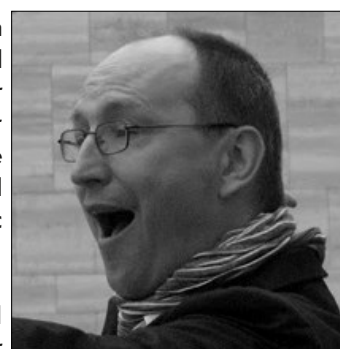
Lutz Wiesotzki

### Bass

Jörg Bornemann  
Erik Brave  
Johannes Broll  
Matthias Burg  
Joachim Corvinus  
Christoph Demmler  
Frieder Hezel  
Thomas Hövels  
Thorsten Krüger  
Bernd Schmitt  
Helmar Spangenberg  
Roland Wendler

**Günter Brick** studied music education and majored in Conducting at the 'Staatlichen Hochschule für Musik Heidelberg-Mannheim' (music conservatory) under Prof Gerald Kegelmann. He then continued his studies in Church Music at the 'Berliner Kirchenmusikschule' (Berlin School of Church Music) in conducting choir and orchestra under Prof Martin Behrmann and completed his degree with honours. From 1990-1998 he lectured in conducting choir and orchestra, score-reading, continuo playing and composition at the 'Berliner Kirchenmusikschule', as well as giving courses in Church Music for the Ev. Landeskirche Berlin-Brandenburg.

Since 1990, Günter has been musical director and organist for the Grunewaldkirche and Cantor for Berlin-Wilmersdorf since 2002. Under his leadership the choirs 'Berliner Kantorei' and 'Berliner Motettenchor' have performed various oratorios with orchestra and a *capella* programmes.



Günter has been teaching Choral-Conducting at the UdK Berlin (C-Seminar) since 2008. In February 2010 he also began conducting a boys' choir at the 'Evangelischen' primary school in Berlin-Wilmersdorf'. In 2012 he was appointed 'Kirchenmusikdirektor', Director of Church Music.

Numerous CD recordings with choir, orchestra and organ performances are available and various appearances and performances on TV and radio have been broadcast. Günter is married to the violinist, Eva Brick; the couple have 3 sons and a daughter.

**SOUTHERN SINFONIA** is a flourishing Chamber Orchestra working across the South of England and the Midlands with a diversity of activities and playing styles. Many of the orchestra's musicians are equally at home on baroque instruments as on modern. This versatility informs all the work that we undertake. The members also work in the community for education and outreach programmes. We are therefore able to offer young and old alike varied musical excellence. A considerable amount of time is spent working with choral societies which the players very much enjoy. The organisation is led by Patron Sir Roger Norrington and Musical Director David Hill. Please visit our website [www.southernsinfonia.co.uk](http://www.southernsinfonia.co.uk) for information on forthcoming performances and details of how to contact us.



#### **First Violin**

Alexander Hohenthal -  
Leader  
Stelios Chatziiosifidis  
Jeremy Sampson  
Dermot Crehan  
Iwona Boesche  
John Smart  
Katrina McWilliams

#### **Second Violin**

Martin Palmer  
Helen Ward  
Marisa Miller  
Kirra Thomas  
Susie Watson  
Thomas Crehan  
Dawn Kelleher

#### **Viola**

Rachel Byrt  
Henrietta Ridgeon  
Jung Hee Keum

Chris Beckett  
Bruce Wilson

#### **Cello**

Leonie Adams  
Alison Gillies  
Helen Downham  
Amy Jolly

#### **Double Bass**

Tim Amherst  
Li Boberg

#### **Flute**

Katey Thomas  
Janna Hunneke

#### **Flute/Piccolo**

Anne Allen

#### **Oboe**

Rachel Broadbent  
Natasha Wilson

#### **Oboe/Cor Anglais**

Simon Dewhurst

#### **Clarinet**

Sarah Thurlow  
Jean Johnson

#### **Bass Clarinet**

Alistair Logan

#### **Bassoon**

Chris Rawley  
Sally Bartholemew

#### **Contra Bassoon**

Jackie Hayter

#### **Horn**

Gillian Jones  
Simon de Souza  
Chris Beagles  
Daniel de Souza

#### **Trumpet**

Ross Brown  
Miles Maguire  
Katie Hodges

#### **Trombone**

Andy Cole  
Stephen Turton  
Alastair Warren

#### **Timpani**

Matt Turner

#### **Percussion**

Chris Woodham  
Mark Halliday  
Sam Jowett

#### **Harp**

Tanya Houghton

#### **Organ**

James Sherlock



**GRAHAM CALDBECK** is one of Britain's leading conductors of amateur choirs, known for his wide-ranging musical skills, innovative programming and stylish performances. He studied music at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he was a Choral Scholar under the late Richard Marlow, conductor of the Trinity College Musical Society Chorus and of a May Week opera. He has sung with the Cathedral Choirs of Guildford, Winchester and Salisbury, in services and concerts across the UK and in France, Germany, Holland, Austria & the USA, and in choirs directed by Benjamin Britten, Sir Neville Marriner, Sir David Willcocks, Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Lorin Maazel and Christopher Hogwood. He holds both the Fellowship and Choir Training diplomas of the Royal College of Organists and is a former Assistant Organist at St. Martin-in-the-Fields, where he broadcast regularly for radio and television. Between 2004 and 2012 he was Director of Music at St Mary The Boltons in Chelsea and last autumn was appointed to a similar position at St. Clement's Church in Jersey.

He has held a number of significant posts in music education, including Director of Music at Stockport Grammar School in Cheshire and Alleyn's School in London, and was Head of the Hampshire Specialist Music Course in Winchester between 1980-89. For fifteen years, Graham held senior positions at the Royal College of Music as Head of Undergraduate Studies and Head of Individual Studies, also teaching as an Academic Studies professor and conducting the RCM Chorus and RCM Chamber Choir. For five years he was an external examiner firstly for Kent University and subsequently City University at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. He now pursues a freelance career as conductor, composer, organist, vocal coach and teacher.

Graham has conducted the Somerset Chamber Choir since 1990 in a remarkably wide-ranging series of over fifty concerts and services, not only in Wells Cathedral and Taunton, but also in Hartland, Plymouth, Martock, Weston-Super-Mare, Stogursey, Bridgwater, Wimborne Minster and the cathedrals of Truro, Worcester, Ripon and St. Paul's. A summary of the choir's achievements is given in the separate choir biography.

Between 1984 and 1999, Graham was conductor of Southern Voices, the Winchester-based chamber choir that he co-founded and rapidly established as one of the leading choirs in the area, regularly giving performances in Winchester Cathedral, Turner Sims Concert Hall at Southampton University, and Romsey Abbey. Between 1996 and 2012, he was conductor of the Nonsuch Singers, a London chamber choir whose concerts were regularly highlighted by the national press. The choir broadcast on radio and television, in the UK and USA and collaborated with a number of significant contemporary composers, including Peter Aston, Diana Burrell, Gabriel Jackson, Roxanna Panufnik, Sir John Tavener and Judith Weir. The choir performed a series of French Baroque works by Lalande and Charpentier in London, and gave the first complete modern performance of Royer's *Zaïde, Reine de Grenade* in St. John's, Smith Square.

He has also acted as chorus master for several concerts and a Grammy-winning recording by Richard Hickox, and also for performances directed by David Hill and Sir David Willcocks. In 2004 he conducted the live televised premiere of Tavener's *Exhortation and Kohima* in the Royal Festival of Remembrance in the Royal Albert Hall with Nonsuch Singers, and in 2007 appeared with the same choir in the Spitalfields Winter Festival.

Graham also was Musical Director of the Mayfield Festival Choir in East Sussex between 2004 and 2012 and has also appeared as a guest conductor with a number of choirs, including the Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society, the Farrant Singers in Salisbury, the Somerset County Youth Choir and the Jersey Festival Choir. He has recently begun to direct the Cantabile Ensemble in Jersey, a small choir focusing on church music. His work with choirs has been highlighted in articles in *Classical Music*, *Choir & Organ*, *Early Music News* and *The Singer* and reviewed in national newspapers, including *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sunday Times*.



**ROBERT MURRAY** (tenor) studied at the Royal College of Music and the National Opera Studio. He was a Jette Parker Young Artist at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden.



Operatic roles include Tamino *Die Zauberflöte*, Lysander *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Agnere *Il re Pastore*, Belfiore *La Finta Giardiniera*, Jacquinio *Fidelio* and Don Ottavio *Don Giovanni* for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; the title role in *Albert Herring* for Glyndebourne Touring Opera; Piquillo *La Périchole* and Tom Rakewell *The Rake's Progress* for Garsington Opera; Ferrando *Così fan Tutte* for Opera North; Male Chorus *Rape of Lucretia* for Den Norske Oper; The Simpleton *Boris Godunov*, Tamino, Toni Reischmann Henze's *Elegy For Young Lovers*, Idamante *Idomeneo*, Don Ottavio *Don Giovanni* and Steuermann *Der Fliegende Holländer* for ENO; Benvolio *Romeo et Juliette* at the Salzburg Festival; the title role in *Jephtha* for Welsh National Opera and the Handel&Haydn Society, Boston; Earl of Essex in Britten's *Gloriana* in his debut at the Staatsoper Hamburg and Bob Boles *Peter Grimes* in Aldeburgh, as part of their Britten centenary celebrations.

Concert performances include Haydn's *Nelson Mass* with Sir John Eliot Gardiner for the BBC Proms; Mozart's *C Minor Mass* both with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra under Sir Charles Mackerras, and with Le Concert D'Astrée under Haim; the Evangelist in Bach's *St John Passion* for the London Handel Festival; *Acis and Galatea* (Damon), Berlioz's *Grand Messe des Morts*, Handel's *Saul*, Haydn's *Creation* (at the Gstaad Festival) and Mendelssohn's *Elijah* (at the BBC Proms) with the Gabrieli Consort & Players; the Mozart *Requiem* at London's Barbican Mostly Mozart Festival with Harry Christophers and The Sixteen. At the Aldeburgh Festival, he has performed Britten's *War Requiem* with Simone Young, and Britten's *Our Hunting Fathers* with the CBSO and Thomas Adès. At the Edinburgh Festival he has performed in Strauss's *Elektra* with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Edward Gardner, Haydn's *Die sieben letzten Worte des Erlösers am Kreuze* with the SCO, Delius' *Mass of Life* with Sir Andrew Davis and Purcell's *King Arthur* with The Sixteen and Harry Christophers. Other concert work includes *Tristan und Isolde* under Valery Gergiev and Bach's *St Matthew Passion* under Yannick Nezet-Seguin, both with the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra; semi-staged performances of Berg's *Wozzeck* in London and Paris with the Philharmonia Orchestra and Esk-Pekka Salonen, Britten's *Serenade* with the Orchestre national de Lyon under McCreesh and Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* with Edward Gardner and the CBSO.

In recital he has performed at the Newbury, Two Moors, Brighton and Aldeburgh Festivals and at London's Wigmore Hall. Most recently he has appeared on Malcolm Martineau's Complete Poulenc Songs series for Signum, excerpts from Britten's *Gloriana* with Ed Gardner for Chandos and Berlioz's *Grande Messe des Morts* with the Gabrieli Consort & Players.

Recent and future engagements include Offenbach's *Vert-Vert* for Garsington Opera, a tour of Handel's *Messiah* with the Academy of Ancient Music and returns to English National Opera and the Handel&Haydn Society, Boston.



**VICTORIA SIMMONDS** (mezzo-soprano) In 1999 Victoria sang an acclaimed Rosina for British Youth Opera and Sesto/*La Clemenza di Tito* for Glyndebourne Touring Opera. In 2000 she made her ENO debut as Nancy T'ang in Adam's *Nixon in China*. She went on to become a company principal. She has sung at all of the major UK opera companies and created the title role in Jonathan Dove's highly acclaimed *The Adventures of Pinocchio* for Opera North.

Engagements abroad include Aix en Provence Festival, Staatstheater Stuttgart, Opernhaus Halle and the Netherlands Opera. Concert engagements include performances with the Philharmonia, Hallé, London Sinfonietta and LSO as well as performances at the Salzburg and Edinburgh Festivals and the Concertgebouw.

Recent and future operatic commitments include Idamante/Idomeneo for the Buxton Festival, further performances of Dorabella/*Così* and a reprise of her performance in the title role of *Pinocchio* for Opera North, Zaida/*Il turco in Italia* and Fox /*The Cunning Little Vixen* for Garsington Opera, the role of Charlotte in Massenet's *Werther* at Les Azuralies Opera Festival, a new opera by Luke Bedford for the Royal Opera House and a new commission by Joanna Lee, *The Way Back Home*, for English National Opera. She sang a major role in the world premiere of *Written on Skin*, a new opera by George Benjamin at the Netherlands Opera, Toulouse, Lisbon, Opéra Comique in Paris, The Royal Opera House Covent Garden, La Scala Milan, the Wiener Festwochen, and the Bavarian State Opera Munich. She will reprise the role at the Lincoln Centre New York and at the Royal Opera House.



Other engagements include a recital at the Buxton Festival and Glagolitic Mass with Cambridge University Music Society, The Dream of Gerontius in Wells Cathedral and with Berliner Kantorei, Verdi Requiem at the Barbican with GSMD, a concert performance of Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony for Garsington opera and a recording of Offenbach *Fantasio* for Opera Rara.

**GARY GRIFFITHS** (*baritone*). Winner of the Welsh Singers Competition in 2012, Gary Griffiths was a finalist in the Wales in the 2013 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World. He studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama where in 2009 he won the prestigious Gold Medal Competition.



At the Welsh National Opera, where he began as an Associate Artist, he made a critically acclaimed debut in 2011 as Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*). His other roles with the company include Cecil (*Maria Stuarda*), Masetto (*Don Giovanni*), Claudio (*Béatrice et Bénédicte*), and Schaunard in a new production of *La Bohème* (for which he was awarded the Welsh Theatre Critics' Award). This season he sings Ned Keene (*Peter Grimes*) for Grange Park Opera and Figaro (*Le Nozze di Figaro*) for New Zealand festival Opera and Il Conte (*le nozze di Figaro*) for Wiesbaden Opera.

Earlier roles have included Germano (*La Scala di Seta*) for British Youth Opera; Dog/Innkeeper (*The Cunning Little Vixen*) for Grange Park Opera; and L'Incognito (*L'Assedio di Calais*), Le Comte (*Chérubin*), Mr. Gedge (*Albert Herring*), Arsenio (*La Spinabla*) and Marquis de la Force (*les Dialogues des Carmelites*) for the Guildhall School Opera and opera highlights on tour with Scottish Opera.

His recent concert appearances include Berlioz 'Les Troyens' with Valery Gergiev and the London Symphony Orchestra, Handel's 'Messiah' with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales at the Royal Festival Hall, Mozart's Requiem with the orchestra of the Welsh National Opera conducted by Christoph Poppen, a gala performance at the National Eisteddfod of Wales with the Welsh Chamber Orchestra, and a performance of 'Belshazzar's Feast' at the Barbican with the Guildhall Symphony Orchestra conducted by Martyn Brabbins. His concert repertoire includes Mendelsson's 'Elijah'; Mozart's 'Requiem' and 'Mass in C Minor'; Haydn's 'Die Jahreszeiten', 'Nelson Mass' and 'Paukenmesse'; Brahms' 'Ein deutsches Requiem'; Durufle's 'Requiem'; and Handel's 'Messiah'.

A committed recitalist, he has appeared at the Oxford Lieder Festival with Sholto Kynoch, the Cowbridge Music Festival with Joseph Middleton, King's Place with Iain Burnside, the Ludlow English Song Weekend with Simon Lepper, Chipping Campden Music, in Harrogate, Dore Abbey and St. David's Hall, Cardiff.

Gary is the recipient of the WNO Chris Ball Bursary, the WNO Sir John Moores Award and the Elizabeth Parry Family Bursary, and is supported by the Joseph Strong Frazer Trust. He is a Samling Scholar and studies with Robert Dean. In recording, he appears on Catrin Finch's Lullabies CD for Deutsche Grammophon.

## VOLUNTEERS

We are very grateful to the large number of volunteers who assist us with numerous aspects of the choir's administration.  
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**Somerset Chamber Choir**  
**Richard Pearce** *organ*  
**Graham Caldbeck** *conductor*

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**Saturday 25 July 2015 at 7pm**

**Wells Cathedral**

**Somerset Chamber Choir**  
**Southern Sinfonia**  
**Alexander Hohenthal** *violin*  
**Richard Pearce** *organ*  
**Graham Caldbeck** *conductor*

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**Poulenc** Liturgies à la vierge noire  
**Messiaen** O sacrum convivium  
**J S Bach** Sarabande & Gigue BWV 1004  
**New commission** In celebration of the life of Rosemary Semple

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