

Newbury Choral Society

(Founded 1884)

President: John Russell B.A., F.R.C.M.

Saturday 10th May, 1980

at 7 p.m.

Corn Exchange, Newbury.

Dream of Gerontius

(Edward Elgar)

Susan Tyrrell Mezzo Soprano

Neil McKinnon Tenor

Jeremy White Bass

Sinfonia Concertante

Leader: Christine Dalton

Conductor:

Clive Fairbairn

In March 1899, the Elgars moved into a house in Malvern, where Edward devised a name for the new home out of the family initials C., A., and E. Elgar: 'Craeg Lea.' It was here that, shortly after, Elgar received the crucial opportunity of his entire career: that of an invitation to write a major work for the Birmingham Festival of 1900.

After much thoughtful searching among the books in his library at Craeg Lea, Elgar selected Cardinal Newman's poem 'The Dream of Gerontius' as his subject:

"The poem has been soaking in my mind for at least eight years. All that time I have been gradually assimilating the thoughts of the author into my own musical promptings."

The early part of 1900 was entirely devoted to work at Craeg Lea on Gerontius which, as usual with Elgar, was first of all fully written out as a piano version.

For the Summer, the Elgars had taken a cottage in a remote region north of Malvern, called Birchwood Lodge and it was here that Edward completed the scoring of the work.

"... the trees are singing my music — or have I sung theirs? ... It's too lovely here."

Part I concerns itself with the death of Gerontius, from his last hours surrounded by Priest and friends, to the departure of his soul as the Priest intones the Liturgy and the chorus sings, 'Go, in the name of Angels and Archangels.'

Part II begins with Gerontius experiencing the stillness and the cessation of time. His Guardian Angel joins him to direct Gerontius eventually to meet his God. But first he witnesses the fury of demons and lost souls and later hears the Angel's description of the Stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi.

Choruses of praise and the pleading of the Angel of Agony lead eventually to that awesome moment in which Gerontius beholds the Beauty of God and in uttermost humility cries, 'Take me away and in the lowest deep there let me be.' The final chorus closes the work with a long-held 'Amen.'

At the foot of the last page of his manuscript score Elgar wrote:-

"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 knew: this, if anything of mine, is worth your memory."

Birchwood Lodge. August 1900.

Clive Fairbairn

Clive Fairbairn became Conductor of the Newbury Choral Society in September 1979 and with this performance completes his first season with the choir.

He also holds a number of appointments with choral, orchestral and operatic organisations in London and the surrounding regions. Amongst these is Conductor of Sinfonia Concertante which is based in the East London-Essex area and which performs there as well as in central London and further afield.

His main London orchestra is the New Mozart Orchestra and he has recently accepted another important post as Chorusmaster/Assistant Conductor to the Handel Opera Society. His conducting activities take him to many parts of the country as well as into London's major concert halls, such as the Queen Elizabeth Hall and St. John's, Smith Square, Westminster.

Susan Tyrrell

Susan Tyrrell studied at the Royal College of Music, joining the Opera School after gaining her Diploma with Honours. In 1977 she won several scholarships, including the Sir Thomas Beecham Opera Scholarship, which enabled her to study in Paris and Vienna.

She has broadcast on Radio France, and in Holland. For the latter her recordings include *The Music Makers* by Elgar, and *Cascando* by Elizabeth Lutyens. She included another first performance by this composer in her recent Purcell Room recital in the Park Lane Group's Young Artists and 20th Century Music Series.

In addition to her concert work, Susan Tyrrell has sung with Glyndebourne Opera, and English National Opera. For the latter she appeared as Cornelia in Handel's *Julius Caesar*, a role she will perform again in the Flanders Festival this Summer. She has recently appeared in the title role of two different productions of *The Rape of Lucretia*, and made her Royal Albert Hall debut in *The Pirates of Penzance*.

Dream of Gerontius

Edward Elgar

Part 1

Prelude

Jesu, Maria, — I am near to death *Tenor*

Kyrie Eleison *Semi-Chorus*

Rouse thee, my fainting soul *Tenor*

Be merciful, be gracious; spare him, Lord *Chorus*

Sanctus fortis, Sanctus Deus *Tenor*

I can no more *Tenor*

Rescue him, O Lord, in this his evil hour *Chorus*

Novissima hora est *Tenor*

Proficiscere anima Christiana *Bass*

Go in the name of Angels and Archangels *Chorus*

Interval

20 minutes

Part II

Introduction

I went to sleep; and now I am refreshed	Tenor
My work is done, My task is o'er	Mezzo Soprano
All hail, My child and brother, hail	Mezzo Soprano and Tenor
Lowborn clods of brute earth	Chorus
It is the restless panting of their being	Mezzo Soprano
The mind bold and independant	Chorus
I see not those false spirits	Tenor and Mezzo Soprano
Praise to the holiest in the height	Chorus
The sound is like the rushing of the wind	Tenor
Glory to him	Chorus
They sing of thy approaching agony	Mezzo Soprano
But hark! a grand mysterious harmony	Tenor
And now the threshold as we traverse it	Mezzo Soprano
Praise to the holiest in the height	Chorus
Thy judgement now is near	Mezzo Soprano and Tenor
Jesu! by that shuddering dread which fell on Thee	Bass
Be merciful, be gracious, spare him, Lord	Chorus
Praise to His name	Mezzo Soprano
Take me away	Tenor
Lord, Thou hast been our refuge	Chorus
Softly and gently, dearly ransomed soul	Mezzo Soprano
Lord, Thou hast been our refuge	Chorus
Praise to the Holiest	Chorus

Neil McKinnon

Neil McKinnon born in 1947 trained at the Royal Manchester College of Music. He has performed with the Hallé Orchestra under Barbirolli singing such roles as Roderigo, Otello, Basilio, (Marriage of Figaro). He won the Riccordi Opera Prize, Imperial League Opera Prize, the Jean Bretey Scholarship and the Friends of Covent Garden Scholarship.

He has performed with the Welsh National Opera, the Glyndebourne Festival Opera, the Glyndebourne Touring Opera, Lyon Opera, France. He has also performed in many oratoria including Messiah, Samsom, Elijah and Dream of Gerontius.

Jeremy White

Jeremy White began as a treble chorister at Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral. He was a choral scholar at Oxford, where he also studied singing with David Johnstone.

He joined the B.B.C. Singers in London, in 1976. He studies singing with Elizabeth Fleming, and has a wide experience of concert performance from Consort Singing to Grand Opera. He has been associated with several performances in new music. This includes work by Robert Sherlaw Johnson, and Peter Wiegold.

He is currently looking forward to engagements in the title role of "The Bear" (Walton), for the Abbey Opera, in London; and in July, a reconstruction of the first performance of Handel's Messiah in Dublin.

The National Federation of Music Societies, to which this Society is affiliated, gives support towards the cost of this concert with funds provided by the Arts Council of Great Britain.

The Society acknowledges financial assistance from the Newbury District Council and the Royal County of Berkshire.

Members of the audience are respectfully reminded that it is illegal to make a tape recording of the concert.

Newbury Choral Society

President: John Russell B.A., F.R.C.M.

Vice-Presidents:

Mrs. G. Abbott	Miss M. Humby M.B.E.
Miss S. Abbott	Mr. W. E. Jones
Mr. & Mrs. Brabazon-Smith	Miss M. Kingham
Miss M.K. Burton	Miss L.A. Leigh
Mrs. G.E. Buxton	Mrs. D.Y.M. Low
Mrs. H.H. Coghlan	Mrs. A.J. Marshall
Mr. & Mrs. R.G. Cooper	Mr. & Mrs. N. Morison
Miss Dawling	Mr. J.H. Pavier
Miss J.E. de Vitre	Mr. T. Roberts
Mr. & Mrs. A. Grange	The Rt. Hon. Lord & Lady Roskill
Mrs. C. Havergal	Mrs. W. Schlesinger
Mr. H. Holmes	Mrs. D.S. Smeeton
Mrs. R. Hue-Williams	Miss P. Waterhouse-Adshead

Chairman: Mr. G.M. Abbott

Conductor: Clive Fairbairn

Accompanist and Deputy Conductor: Gillian Lovett

Hon. Librarian: M. Goodwin

Executive Committee:

Miss G. Lovett	Miss E. Hayter
Miss C.S. Hay	Mr. J. Chorley
Mr. K.R. Williams	

Hon. Secretary

Mrs. A. Turner
8, The Glade
Newbury

Hon. Treasurer

Mr. R. Woodward
C/o National Westminster Bank
Broad Street, Reading