

# 'Dream' given effective performance

AN inspiring performance of Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* was given by Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir on Saturday at the Civic Hall.

Under conductor emeritus Vernon Handley the performance was both sensitive and effective.

The opening section found the intricacies of the string writing well handled, accurate and tidy and some unfortunate tuning difficulties in the wind were quickly resolved.

Tenor Arthur Davies captured well the tension felt by Gerontius, meeting his death with human apprehension. Davies' more relaxed performance in the second half reflected Gerontius becoming less fearful and accepting the reassurances of the Angel.

The Angel's role was taken by mezzo soprano Linda Finnie who sang with sensitivity, although her words were rather unclear at times.

Michael Pearce, baritone, sang the part of the priest in the first half and the Angel of the Agony in the second. His assistants were sung by the choir, which also became demons, "angelicals" and souls later in the work. Their performance was most atmospheric as they portrayed emotions ranging from the depths

of despair at death to the joy of the glory of Heaven.

A repositioning of the string sections, by the second violins and cellos swapping their normal positions, gave effect to the sound as the cellos gained brightness and richness and the violins an Elgarian warmth under Handley's direction. Former director of music in Guildford, Handley is a recognised expert in the interpretation of Elgar's music.

The performance was well received by a sizeable audience.

Sarah Greinig