

27th September 2004

Dear

Guildford Philharmonic Choir: Dream of Gerontius, Saturday 30th October 2004

This is to let you know about our next concert, which will feature Elgar's Dream of Gerontius. This will be performed in Guildford Cathedral on Saturday 30th October 2004 at 7.30 p.m.

The Dream of Gerontius is one of Elgar's most loved works, and you probably know it very well. It is a setting of words written by Cardinal Newman which describe Gerontius' imagined approach to death, his meeting with God to be judged, and the aftermath. The oratorio is stacked full of the most beautiful tunes, both solos and choruses. It is based on a series of musical themes which are set out in the introduction and then recur throughout the work, including fear, agony, awe, repentance, easing of pain, judgment etc. Several wonderful passages stand out, including the famous Demon's chorus, the heavenly singing of 'Praise to the Holiest', and many beautiful and moving moments for the soloists. The result is a powerful emotional experience which is nevertheless easy and hugely enjoyable listening.

The solo parts call for a first class line up to put them across, and this will be provided by Eugene Ginty (Gerontius), Catherine Denley (Angel) and Michael Bundy (Angel of the Agony/Priest). The choir will produce a great rendering of the famous choruses. The orchestra will be The Forest Philharmonic, who play with such joy and have given us so many outstanding and committed performances in recent years. The conductor will be Jeremy Backhouse. Altogether an evening not to be missed.

There is a special point of interest about Eugene Ginty who will sing Gerontius. On the last occasion that we performed this work a few years ago, the man scheduled to sing Gerontius cancelled on the morning of the concert, suffering from a heavy cold. All the performers and the conductor were already on their way to the Hall for the final rehearsal and now the central performer was missing. What were we to do? A telephone call was made to Eugene, who rose brilliantly to the challenge. He set out immediately from his home in East Anglia, reminding himself of the solo part as he travelled along, and arrived just in time for the rehearsal. He then gave a thrilling performance and saved the day. It will be a great joy to hear him again with plenty of time for his preparation.

If you would like me to get tickets for you, please let me know.

Tickets £20, £15 and £10 with student concessions £5, available from Guildford Tourist Information, Tunsgate 01483 444334 or the Cathedral Booking Office 01483 547870

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