



# London Philharmonic Orchestra

**ELGAR**

**THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS**

**EDWARD GARDNER** conductor

**LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA & CHOIR**

**HALLÉ CHOIR**

**ALLAN CLAYTON | JAMIE BARTON | JAMES PLATT**

**A BBC recording**

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## EDWARD ELGAR (1857–1934)

### THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS, OP. 36

#### A BOLD AND CATHOLIC VISION

*'Proficiscere anima Christiana, de hoc mundo! Go forth upon thy journey, Christian soul! Go from this world!'* For Christians, especially Roman Catholics, these words provide solace and, for the dying, certainty about the world to come. They herald the end of Part One of Elgar's musical setting of Saint John Henry Newman's 1865 poem *The Dream of Gerontius*, the originality of which, 125 years after its premiere, can still surprise and even astonish.

Just over 100 years separates the first performances of Haydn's *Creation* in 1798 and *The Dream of Gerontius* in 1900: two masterpieces forming a bridge across the 19th century between two composers brought up in the faith of Rome. Haydn composed a traditional oratorio, whilst Elgar deliberately avoided the term, and it appears nowhere in his score. Whereas *The Creation* reflects Haydn's certainty in the existence of God – a confident, assured faith rooted in optimism – *The Dream of Gerontius* inhabits a very different world. Elgar takes us on a deeply personal, introspective journey, at times dark and terrifying, at others bathed in an overwhelming light as the promise of an afterlife and being 'wakened on the morrow' become reality.

*The Dream of Gerontius* is Elgar's truly Catholic composition, a choral masterpiece outshining in scale and imagination anything he had composed previously for Worcester's Roman Catholic Church of St George. In its vision and use of the orchestra, it eclipses his secular choral works such as *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf*, as well as his most substantial previous setting of a religious text, *The Light of Life*, both from 1896. Much is made of Elgar's likely loss of faith in later years, but in *The Dream of Gerontius*, the composer nailed his colours to the mast of Rome and uncompromisingly swept aside the steady stream of oratorios emerging from the pens of other, lesser (and largely forgotten) contemporary Protestant composers. It had taken him until past the age of 40, but in the space of less than two years (1899–1900), Elgar had composed two masterpieces: his *Enigma Variations*, and now this setting of Newman's poem. 'I've written it out of my inmost inside', he wrote, and it shows.

The son and husband of Catholic converts, Elgar was no doubt helped by the interest Newman's poem had attracted across Victorian society, not the least because the military hero of the day, General Charles Gordon, owned a (heavily annotated) copy, which came to light after his death in Khartoum in 1885. Nevertheless,

Elgar's choice of Newman's text was to say the least brave, for, as the pianist Sir Stephen Hough put it: '... to choose this deeply Catholic text in a country where "Papists" were a suspicious, despised and even ridiculed minority was to court disaster. Yet he went ahead, with total disregard for any possible censure or disfavour'.

## BRINGING GERONTIUS TO LIFE

In 1898, Elgar had been commissioned to write a major new work for the 1900 Birmingham Triennial Musical Festival. Although eager to set Newman's poem, he was concerned that it might be too overtly Roman Catholic for the occasion. However, he was eventually persuaded by his publisher, Novello & Co., that the text was acceptable. The short score of the complete work was finished by early June, and the orchestration by early August. Elgar's editor at Novello, August Jaeger, quickly recognised the significance and originality of the work and, in a prescient letter to the composer in May 1900, wrote: 'You must not, *cannot* expect this work of yours to be appreciated by the ordinary amateur (or critic!) after one hearing. You will have to rest content, as other great men had to before you ...'. Jaeger's contribution to the creation of *The Dream of Gerontius* cannot be overstated. He praised, cajoled and criticised Elgar, and resolutely refused to accept the composer's original idea for Gerontius's glimpse of God. Elgar's original scheme

had been for Gerontius's cry of release, joy and pain, 'Take me away', to follow the chorus 'Lord, Thou has been our refuge' without a break. Jaeger thought this weak and 'undramatic', and begged Elgar to alter the section. Elgar refused to budge, but Jaeger knew how to move the composer, and suggested that only Wagner or Strauss would have composed the passage he believed was necessary! Eventually, Elgar capitulated, and the massive chords and shattering moment when Gerontius meets his maker still retain the impact that their first listeners must have felt.

## A TROUBLED PREMIERE AND GROWING RECOGNITION

The infamous premiere of *The Dream of Gerontius*, at Birmingham's Town Hall on 3 October 1900, would resonate with Elgar for the rest of his life. It is true that the chorus had insufficient rehearsal time, and denominational prejudice no doubt also affected many of those singing. The original chorusmaster died suddenly before the premiere, and was replaced by one who had little sympathy with Catholic imagery or liturgy. Furthermore, the conductor – the great Hans Richter – also came to the score too late to fully assimilate its complexities.

Elgar may have been in despair after the premiere, but enough discerning and influential listeners could see past the imperfect realisation and recognise the originality of the work, that word of *Gerontius* quickly travelled beyond Birmingham. This led directly to performances in Chicago and New York, before London audiences heard it for the first time, in the yet-to-be-completed Westminster Cathedral in 1903. First, though, came a number of performances in Germany, notably in Düsseldorf in 1901, where Elgar was hailed by Richard Strauss. Consequently, it began to dawn on Elgar's fellow countrymen that a new choral masterpiece had emerged.

Initially, this caused the custodians of England's established Church difficulties. Although happily performing works in Latin composed by continental composers brought up in the Catholic faith, an English-language choral work by a local Catholic proved too much for the clergy of Elgar's local Three Choirs Festival. The clergy insisted on a text that removed all hints of 'Rome', and words such as 'Maria' and 'Masses', together with suggestions of Purgatory, were excised for its Festival performance in Worcester Cathedral in 1902. This 'tradition' continued, certainly within the Three Choirs fraternity, until as late as 1933 for that year's Hereford Festival – an arrangement the usually touchy Elgar accepted as a means of ensuring *Gerontius* was heard.

## THE JOURNEY OF THE SOUL

Newman's text, written in seven sections, tells a vivid story that at times becomes more discursive and meditative. For his Part One, Elgar set most of the first part of the poem, which concentrates on the dying Gerontius, his death and last rites. In Part Two, Elgar concentrates on the drama of Gerontius's journey to God's presence and his sentencing to purgatory, cutting most of the text of Newman's 'The Souls in Purgatory'. However, he allowed the Angels' song of release, 'Softly and gently', to be sung in its entirety. Almost for the first time in a work of this nature, Elgar treats the orchestra as an essential part of the drama, not just an accompaniment, laying out his intention from the beginning as an orchestral prelude portrays the story to come: the intimacy of the room in which the dying Gerontius lies, his meeting with his guardian angel, and his journey to judgement and beyond. Elgar wrote to a friend: 'I've seen in thought the Soul go up, & have written my own heart's blood into the score.'

The profound and original ending of *Gerontius* conveys the dichotomy of Purgatory: the soul of Gerontius, divorced from God, but at the same time entering a period of purification that will, in turn, lead back to God's presence. This intensely Catholic state offers the listener of any faith a conclusion that is infinite, and which affords hope, or – as the late conductor Sir Andrew

Davis put it a few years ago, for those who have little or no faith – ‘completes us in the end’. Therefore, whether convinced Christian or non-believer, the listener cannot fail to recognise the extraordinary sense of release Elgar produces as his noble melody conveys the soul to its destination, in the knowledge that his ‘night of trial’ will be swift and that he will be woken ‘on the morrow’: ‘Farewell, but not for ever! brother dear’.

#### *Andrew Neill, 2025*

*Andrew Neill was Chairman of the Elgar Society from 1992–2008. He has contributed programme and booklet notes on the music of Elgar, Strauss, Vaughan Williams and their contemporaries for the LPO and other orchestras, and has broadcast and written extensively about these composers for a wide range of journals and publications.*



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# THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS

## TEXT

### PART ONE

#### 01 Prelude

#### 02 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.

#### 03 Assistants

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison.  
Holy Mary, pray for him.  
All holy Angels, pray for him.  
Choirs of the righteous, pray for him.

All Apostles, all Evangelists, pray for him.  
All holy Disciples of the Lord, pray for him.  
All holy Innocents, pray for him.  
All holy Martyrs, all holy Confessors,  
All holy Hermits, all holy Virgins,  
All ye Saints of God, pray for him.

#### 04 Gerontius

Rouse thee, my fainting soul, and play the man;  
And through each waning span  
Of life and thought as still has to be trod,  
Prepare to meet thy God.  
And while the storm of that bewilderment  
Is for a season spent,  
And ere afresh the ruin on me fall,  
Use well the interval.

#### 05 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.

**06 Gerontius**

Sanctus fortis, Sanctus Deus,  
De profundis oro te,  
Miserere, Judex meus,  
Parce mihi, Domine.  
Firmly I believe and truly  
God is Three, and God is One;  
And I next acknowledge duly  
Manhood taken by the Son.  
And I trust and hope most fully  
In that Manhood crucified;  
And each thought and deed unruly  
Do to death, as He has died.  
Simply to His grace and wholly  
Light and life and strength belong.  
And I love, supremely, solely,  
Him the holy, Him the strong.  
Sanctus fortis, Sanctus Deus,  
De profundis oro te,  
Miserere, Judex meus,  
Parce mihi, Domine.

And I hold in veneration,  
For the love of Him alone,  
Holy Church, as His creation,  
And her teachings, as His own.  
And I take with joy whatever  
Now besets me, pain or fear,  
And with a strong will I sever  
All the ties which bind me here.  
Adoration aye be given,  
With and through the angelic host,  
To the God of earth and heaven,  
Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Sanctus fortis, Sanctus Deus,  
De profundis, oro te,  
Miserere, Judex meus,  
Mortis in discrimine.

**07** I can no more; for now it comes again,  
That sense of ruin, which is worse than pain,  
That masterful negation and collapse  
Of all that makes me man ...  
... And, crueller still,  
A fierce and restless fright begins to fill  
The mansion of my soul. And, worse and worse,  
Some bodily form of ill  
Floats on the wind, with many a loathsome curse  
Tainting the hallowed air, and laughs, and flaps  
Its hideous wings  
And makes me wild with horror and dismay.  
O Jesu, help! pray for me, Mary, pray!  
Some Angel, Jesu! such as came to Thee

In Thine own agony ...  
Mary, pray for me. Joseph, pray for me.  
Mary, pray for me.

**08 Assistants**

Rescue him, O Lord, in this his evil hour,  
As of old, so many by Thy gracious power –  
Noe from the waters in a saving home; (Amen)  
Job from all his multi-form and fell distress; (Amen)  
Moses from the land of bondage and despair; (Amen)  
David from Golia and the wrath of Saul; (Amen)  
– So, to show Thy power,  
Rescue this Thy servant in his evil hour.

**09 Gerontius**

Novissima hora est; and I fain would sleep,  
The pain has wearied me ... Into Thy hands,  
O Lord, into Thy hands ...

**10 The Priest and Assistants**

Proficiscere, anima Christiana, de hoc mundo!  
Go forth upon thy journey, Christian soul!  
Go from this world! Go, in the name of God  
The Omnipotent Father, who created thee!  
Go, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord,  
Son of the living God, who bled for thee!  
Go, in the name of the Holy Spirit,  
Who Hath been poured out on thee!

**11** Go in the name  
Of Angels and Archangels; in the name  
Of Thrones and Dominations; in the name  
Of Princedoms and of Powers; and in the name  
Of Cherubim and Seraphim, go forth!  
Go, in the name of Patriarchs and Prophets;

And of Apostles and Evangelists,  
Of Martyrs and Confessors, in the name  
Of holy Monks and Hermits; in the name  
Of holy Virgins; and all Saints of God,  
Both men and women, go! Go on thy course;  
And may thy place today be found in peace,  
And may thy dwelling be the Holy Mount  
Of Sion: – through the Same, through Christ our Lord.

## PART TWO

**01 Introduction**

**02 Soul of Gerontius**

I went to sleep; and now I am refreshed.  
A strange refreshment: for I feel in me  
An inexpressive lightness, and a sense  
Of freedom, as I were at length myself,  
And ne'er had been before. How still it is!  
I hear no more the busy beat of time,  
No, nor my fluttering breath, nor struggling pulse;  
Nor does one moment differ from the next.  
This silence pours a solitariness  
Into the very essence of my soul;  
And the deep rest, so soothing and so sweet,  
Hath something too of sternness and of pain.  
Another marvel: someone has me fast  
Within his ample palm ...  
A uniform and gentle pressure tells me I am not  
Self moving, but borne forward on my way.  
And hark! I hear a singing; yet in sooth

I cannot of that music rightly say  
Whether I hear, or touch, or taste the tones.  
Oh, what a heart-subduing melody!

03

**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.

04

**Soul**

It is a member of that family  
Of wond'rous beings, who, ere the world were made,  
Millions of ages back, have stood around The throne of  
God.

I will address him. Mighty one, my Lord,  
My Guardian Spirit, all hail!

**Angel**

All hail! My child and brother, hail! what wouldest thou?

**Soul**

I would have nothing but to speak with thee  
For speaking's sake. I wish to hold with thee  
Conscious communion; though I fain would know  
A maze of things, were it but meet to ask,  
And not a curiousness.

**Angel**

You cannot now  
Cherish a wish which ought not to be wished.

05

**Soul**

Then I will speak: I ever had believed  
That on the moment when the struggling soul  
Quitted its mortal case, forthwith it fell  
Under the awful Presence of its God,  
There to be judged and sent to its own place.  
What lets me now from going to my Lord?

**Angel**

Thou art not let; but with extremest speed  
Art hurrying to the Just and Holy Judge.

**Soul**

Dear Angel, say,  
Why have I now no fear of meeting Him?  
Along my earthly life, the thought of death  
And judgement was to me most terrible.

**Angel**

It is because  
Then thou didst fear; that now thou dost not fear.  
Thou hast forestalled the agony, and so  
For thee bitterness of death is passed.  
Also, because already in thy soul

The judgement is begun.  
A presage falls upon thee, as a ray  
Straight from the Judge, expressive of thy lot.  
That calm and joy uprising in thy soul  
Is first-fruit to thee of thy recompense,  
And heaven begun.

### **Soul**

Now that the hour is come, my fear is fled;  
And at this balance of my destiny,  
Now close upon me, I can forward look  
With a serenest joy.

06 But hark! upon my sense  
Comes a fierce hubbub, which would make me fear  
Could I be frightened.

### **Angel**

We are now arrived  
Close on the judgement-court; that sullen howl  
Is from the demons who assemble there,  
Hungry and wild, to claim their property,  
And gather souls for hell. Hark to their cry!

### **Soul**

How sour and how uncouth a dissonance!

### 07 **Demons**

Low-born clods  
Of brute earth,  
They aspire  
To become gods,  
By a new birth,  
And an extra grace,  
And a score of merits,  
As if aught

Could stand in place  
Of the high thought,  
And the glance of fire  
Of the great spirits,  
The powers blest;  
The lords by right,  
The primal owners  
Of the proud dwelling  
And realm of light –  
Dispossessed,  
Aside thrust,  
Chucked down,  
By the sheer might  
Of a despot's will,  
Of a tyrant's frown,  
Who after expelling  
Their hosts, gave,  
Triumphant still,  
And still unjust,  
Each forfeit crown  
To psalm-droners,  
And canting groaners,  
To every slave,  
And pious cheat,  
And crawling knave,  
Who licked the dust  
Under his feet.

### **Angel**

It is the restless panting of their being;  
Like beasts of prey, who, caged within their bars,  
In a deep hideous purring have their life,  
And an incessant pacing to and fro.

08

**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,  
 Ha! Ha! A coward's plea.  
 Give him his price,  
 Saint though he be,  
 From shrewd good sense  
 He'll slave for hire,  
 Ha! Ha! And does but aspire  
 To the heaven above  
 With sordid aim,  
 And not from love.  
 Ha! Ha!

09

**Soul**

I see not those false spirits; shall I see  
 My dearest Master, when I reach His throne?

**Angel**

Yes – for one moment thou shalt see thy Lord,  
 One moment; but thou knowest not, my child,  
 What thou dost ask; that sight of the Most Fair  
 Will gladden thee, but it will pierce thee too.

**Soul**

Thou speakest darkly, Angel! and an awe  
 Falls on me, and a fear lest I be rash.

**Angel**

There was a mortal, who is now above  
 In the mid-glory: he, when near to die,  
 Was given communion with the Crucified –  
 Such that the Master's very wounds were stamped  
 Upon his flesh; and, from the agony  
 Which thrilled through body and soul in that embrace,  
 Learn that the flame of the Everlasting Love  
 Doth burn ere it transform ...

10

**Choir of Angelicals**

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

**Angel**

Hark to those sounds!  
 They come of tender beings angelical,  
 Least and most childlike of the sons of God.

**Choir of Angelicals**

Praise to the Holiest in the height,  
 And in the depth be praise;  
 In all His words most wonderful;  
 Most sure in all His ways!  
 To us His elder race He gave

To battle and to win,  
Without the chastisement of pain,  
Without the soil of sin.  
The younger son He willed to be  
A marvel in His birth:  
Spirit and flesh His parents were;  
His home was heaven and earth.  
The eternal blessed His child, and armed,  
And sent Him hence afar,  
To serve as champion in the field  
Of elemental war.  
To be His Viceroy in the world  
Of matter, and of sense;  
Upon the frontier, towards the foe,  
A resolute defence.

### **Angel**

We now have passed the gate, and are within  
The House of Judgement ...

### **Soul**

The sound is like the rushing of the wind –  
The summer wind – among the lofty pines.

11

### **Choir of Angelicals**

Glory to Him, who evermore  
By truth and justice reigns;  
Who tears the soul from out its case,  
And burns away its stains!

### **Angel**

They sing of thy approaching agony,  
Which thou so eagerly didst question of.

### **Soul**

12

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.

13

### **Choir of Angelicals**

Praise to the Holiest in the height,  
And in the depth be praise:  
In all His words most wonderful;  
Most sure in all His ways!  
O loving wisdom of our God!  
When all was sin and shame,  
A second Adam to the fight  
And to the rescue came.  
O Wisest love! that flesh and blood  
Which did in Adam fail,  
Should strive afresh against the foe,  
Should strive and should prevail.  
And that a higher gift than grace  
Should flesh and blood refine,  
God's Presence and His very Self,  
And Essence all divine.  
O generous love! that He who smote  
In man for man the foe,  
The double agony in man  
For man should undergo;  
And in the garden secretly,  
And on the cross on high,  
Should teach His brethren and inspire

To suffer and to die.  
Praise to the Holiest in the height,  
And in the depth be praise:  
In all His words most wonderful,  
Most sure in all His ways!

14

### **Angel**

Thy judgement now is near, for we are come  
Into the veiled presence of our God.

### **Soul**

I hear the voices that I left on earth.

### **Angel**

It is the voice of friends around thy bed,  
Who say the 'Subvenite' with the priest.  
Hither the echoes come; before the Throne  
Stands the great Angel of the Agony,  
The same who strengthened Him, what time He knelt  
Lone in the garden shade; bedewed with blood.  
That Angel best can plead with Him for all  
Tormented souls, the dying and the dead.

15

### **Angel of the Agony**

Jesu! by that shuddering dread which fell on Thee;  
Jesu! by that cold dismay which sickened Thee;  
Jesu! by that pang of heart which thrilled in Thee;  
Jesu! by that mount of sins which crippled Thee;  
Jesu! by that sense of guilt which stifled Thee;  
Jesu! by that innocence which girdled Thee;  
Jesu! by that sanctity which reigned in Thee;  
Jesu! by that Godhead which was one with Thee;  
Jesu! spare these souls which are so dear to Thee;  
Souls, who in prison, calm and patient, wait for Thee;

Hasten, Lord, their hour, and bid them come to Thee,  
To that glorious Home, where they shall ever gaze on  
Thee.

Jesu! spare these souls which are so dear to Thee.

16

### **Soul**

I go before my Judge ...

### **Voices on Earth**

Be merciful, be gracious; spare him, Lord  
Be merciful, be gracious; Lord, deliver him.

17

### **Angel**

... Praise to His Name!  
O happy, suffering soul! for it is safe,  
Consumed, yet quickened, by the glance of God.  
Alleluia! Praise to His Name.

18

### **Soul**

Take me away, and in the lowest deep  
There let me be,  
And there in hope the lone night-watches keep,  
Told out for me.  
There, motionless and happy in my pain,  
Lone, not forlorn –  
There will I sing my sad perpetual strain,  
Until the morn,  
There will I sing, and soothe my stricken breast,  
Which ne'er can cease  
To throb, and pine, and languish, till possessed  
Of its Sole Peace.  
There will I sing my absent Lord and Love:  
Take me away,  
That sooner I may rise, and go above,

And see Him in the truth of everlasting day.  
Take me away, and in the lowest deep  
There let me be.

**19 Souls in Purgatory**

Lord, Thou hast been our refuge: in every generation;  
Before the hills were born, and the world was:  
from age to age Thou art God.

**20 Angel**

Softly and gently, dearly ransomed soul,  
In my most loving arms I now enfold thee,  
And o'er the penal waters, as they roll,  
I poise thee, and I lower thee, and hold thee.  
And carefully I dip thee in the lake,  
And thou, without a sob or a resistance,  
Dost through the flood thy rapid passage take,  
Sinking deep, deeper, into the dim distance.  
Angels, to whom the willing task is given,  
Shall tend, and nurse, and lull thee, as 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!

**Souls**

Lord, Thou hast been our refuge: in every generation;  
Come back, O Lord! how long: and be entreated for Thy  
servants.

Bring us not, Lord, very low: for Thou hast said,  
Come back again, ye sons of Adam. Amen.

**Choir of Angelicals**

Praise to the Holiest, Amen.

*Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801–90)*

## EDWARD GARDNER CONDUCTOR



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Edward Gardner has been Principal Conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra since 2021. He is also Music Director of the Norwegian Opera & Ballet, and Honorary Conductor of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, following his tenure as Chief Conductor from 2015–24.

Edward Gardner's previous recordings on

the LPO Label include Tippett's *The Midsummer Marriage* – which won a 2023 Gramophone Award – and *A Child of Our Time*, as well as the composer's Piano Concerto and Symphony No. 2; Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust*; and works by Rachmaninov, Dvořák, Schumann, Britten and Tania León.

In demand as a guest conductor, Edward has appeared with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic and Vienna Symphony. He also continues his longstanding collaborations with the City of

Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, where he was Principal Guest Conductor from 2010–16, and the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

Music Director of English National Opera from 2006–15, Edward has an ongoing relationship with New York's Metropolitan Opera, where he has conducted *The Damnation of Faust*, *Carmen*, *Don Giovanni*, *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Werther*. He made his debut at London's Royal Opera House in 2019 in *Káťa Kabanová*, returning for *Werther* the following season and the world premiere of Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Festen* in 2025. Elsewhere, he has conducted at the Bavarian State Opera, La Scala, Chicago Lyric Opera, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Opéra National de Paris and Teatro di San Carlo.

Born in Gloucester in 1974, Edward was educated at the University of Cambridge and the Royal Academy of Music. He went on to become Assistant Conductor of the Hallé and Music Director of Glyndebourne Touring Opera. His many accolades include Royal Philharmonic Society Award Conductor of the Year (2008), an Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera (2009) and an OBE for services to music in The Queen's Birthday Honours (2012).

Edward Gardner's position at the LPO is generously supported by Aud Jebsen.

## ALLAN CLAYTON

TENOR *Gerontius*



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Born in the UK, tenor Allan Clayton studied at St John's College, Cambridge and the Royal Academy of Music. His awards include a Borletti-Buitoni Fellowship, the 2018 RPS Singer Award, an MBE in 2021, and the 2025 Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera.

The flexibility and consistency of Allan's vocal range, combined with a magnetic stage presence, have led to international acclaim in music from Baroque to contemporary, and a similarly wide-ranging discography. He garnered huge praise as the title role in Brett Dean's opera *Hamlet*, which received its world premiere at the 2017 Glyndebourne Festival with the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Vladimir Jurowski, and won the 2019 Gramophone Contemporary Award. Recent operatic engagements include *Peter Grimes* (Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Metropolitan Opera, Paris Opera, Opera di Roma and Teatro Real, Madrid), and the title role in Dean's *Hamlet* at the Bavarian State Opera, Metropolitan Opera and Opera Australia, as well as at Glyndebourne.

An advocate of contemporary music, Allan has appeared in the world premieres of George Benjamin's *Written on Skin*, Jonathan Dove's *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, and Gerald Barry's *Alice's Adventures Underground*. Several composers have written song-cycles specifically with his voice in mind, including Mark-Anthony Turnage with *Refugee*, Josephine Stephenson with *Une saison en enfer*, and Tom Coult with *Monologues for the Curious*.

Allan appears regularly at the world's leading concert venues and festivals, with repertoire ranging from Schubert's *Winterreise* and *Die schöne Müllerin* to Britten's *War Requiem*, Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* and Berlioz's *L'enfance du Christ*. His concert appearances with the London Philharmonic Orchestra have included the role of Froh in a concert performance of Wagner's *Das Rheingold* under Vladimir Jurowski in 2018; Elgar's *The Apostles* under Martyn Brabbins in 2019; and Haydn's *The Creation* under Edward Gardner in 2024, all at the Royal Festival Hall.

## JAMIE BARTON

### MEZZO-SOPRANO *Angel*



© Stacey Bode

Jamie Barton's iconic career was launched with her double victory (First Prize and Song Prize) at the 2013 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World competition. The Richard Tucker Award in 2015 and the Metropolitan Opera's Beverly Sills Artist Award in 2017 followed, and she has since established her position as one of the finest mezzo-sopranos

in the world. A trailblazer for inclusion and diversity in the arts, she made history – and raised the rainbow flag – at the Last Night of the Proms in 2019, which was broadcast worldwide on television and on BBC Radio 3, conducted by Sakari Oramo.

A favourite at the Metropolitan Opera, Jamie's notable appearances there have included Eboli (*Don Carlos*), Mère Marie (*Les Dialogues de Carmelites*), the title role in Gluck's *Orfeo*, Elisabetta (*Maria Stuarda*), Adalgisa (*Norma*), and Azucena (*Il trovatore*). Her remarkable artistry has also been recognised on the most prestigious European stages, including her return to Royal Opera House, Covent Garden as Azucena in Adele

Thomas's production of *Il trovatore* under Sir Antonio Pappano, and reprising her formidable Brangäne (*Tristan und Isolde*) at the Bavarian State Opera under Juraj Valčuha.

In concert, Jamie has collaborated with conductors including Marin Alsop for both Brahms's *Alto Rhapsody* with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment in her BBC Proms debut, and Bernstein's Symphony No. 1 for her London Symphony Orchestra debut; both Sir Andrew Davis and Sir Antonio Pappano in Verdi's *Requiem* with the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; and James Gaffigan for Mahler's Symphony No. 2 at the Palau de les Arts Reina Sofía. This BBC Proms performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* marked her debut with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

Continuing to challenge ideas of identity and gender, Jamie has drawn crowds with programmes led by female composers at London's Wigmore Hall, New York's Carnegie Hall, Tanglewood Festival, Zankel Hall, the Celebrity Series in Boston, Matinée Musicale Cincinnati, and at the Kennedy Center in Washington as part of Renée Fleming's VOICES series.

## JAMES PLATT

BASS *Priest/Angel of the Agony*



© Justine Miko

Educated at Chetham's School of Music, the Royal Academy of Music, and the Opera Studies course at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, British bass James Platt was a member of the Jette Parker Artists Programme at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, from 2014–16.

He has given renowned performances of Sarastro (*The Magic Flute*) and King of Egypt (*Aida*) at the Royal Opera; Bottom (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) at the Deutsche Oper Berlin and The Grange Festival; Father Trulove (*The Rake's Progress*) at Maggio Musicale, Florence; Crespel (*Les contes d'Hoffmann*) and Don Basilio (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) at the Deutsche Oper Berlin; Sarastro and the Notary Carlino (*Don Pasquale*) at Glyndebourne Festival Opera; Sarastro, Il Commendatore (*Don Giovanni*) and Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*) at Welsh National Opera; Hermann Ortel (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*) at the Teatro alla Scala, Milan; First Soldier (*Salome*) and Swallow (*Peter Grimes*) at De Nationale Opera, Amsterdam; Il Commendatore at Opéra de Lille and

Opera North; and Prince Gremin (*Eugene Onegin*) at Scottish Opera.

This BBC Proms performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* was James's debut with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Other concert highlights have included Zacharie in Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète* with the London Symphony Orchestra under Sir Mark Elder at the Aix-en-Provence Festival; Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* with Les Musiciens du Louvre under Marc Minkowski; Rossini's *Petite messe solennelle* with the BBC Singers under David Hill at the BBC Proms; Shostakovich's *Four Romances on Poems by Pushkin* with the Hallé under Sir Mark Elder; Handel's *Messiah* with the Hallé under Christian Curnyn; Verdi's *Requiem* with the Orchestre national de Lyon under Leonard Slatkin, and with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra under David Hill; Mahler's Symphony No. 8 with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra under Vasily Petrenko; Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Royal Northern Sinfonia under Lars Vogt; and Dvořák's *Requiem* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Jiří Bělohlávek.

## LONDON PHILHARMONIC CHOIR

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR: NEVILLE CREED

The London Philharmonic Choir was founded in 1947 as the chorus for the London Philharmonic Orchestra. It is widely regarded as one of Britain's finest choirs and consistently meets with critical acclaim. Performing regularly with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Choir also works with many other orchestras throughout the United Kingdom and makes annual appearances at the BBC Proms.

The Choir has performed under some of the world's most eminent conductors – among them Marin Alsop, Pierre Boulez, Semyon Bychkov, Mark Elder, John Eliot Gardiner, Edward Gardner, Bernard Haitink, Neeme Järvi, Vladimir Jurowski, Kurt Masur, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Roger Norrington, Andrés Orozco-Estrada, Simon Rattle, Georg Solti, Nathalie Stutzmann and Klaus Tennstedt.

The London Philharmonic Choir has made numerous recordings for CD, radio and television. The Choir often travels overseas and in recent years it has given concerts in many European countries, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Australia.

The Choir prides itself on its inclusive culture, achieving first-class performances from its members, who are volunteers from all walks of life.

[lpc.org.uk](http://lpc.org.uk)

## HALLÉ CHOIR

CHORAL DIRECTOR: MATTHEW HAMILTON

Founded alongside the Orchestra by Sir Charles Hallé in 1858, the internationally-acclaimed Hallé Choir gives around 15 concerts a year with the Hallé at The Bridgewater Hall, Manchester.

As well as appearing with the Hallé, the Choir also performs regularly with other orchestras at venues and festivals around the UK, including the BBC Proms, Edinburgh International Festival and York Minster.

The Choir features regularly on the Hallé's multi-award-winning recording label, including performances of Elgar's three great oratorios *The Dream of Gerontius*, *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* with the Hallé and Sir Mark Elder.

The Hallé Choir is an adult symphony chorus, made up of over 200 singers from across the North West and beyond, and from all walks of life. Membership is by audition. Members enjoy individual vocal coaching and social events alongside regular rehearsals and performances.

[halle.co.uk](http://halle.co.uk)

# LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

The London Philharmonic Orchestra is one of the world's finest orchestras, balancing a long and distinguished history with its present-day position as one of the most dynamic and forward-looking ensembles in the UK. This reputation has been secured by the Orchestra's performances in the concert hall and opera house, its many award-winning recordings, trailblazing international tours and wide-ranging educational work.

Founded by Sir Thomas Beecham in 1932, the Orchestra has since been headed by many of the world's greatest conductors, including Sir Adrian Boult, Bernard Haitink, Sir Georg Solti, Klaus Tennstedt and Kurt Masur. In September 2021 Edward Gardner became the Orchestra's Principal Conductor, succeeding Vladimir Jurowski, who became Conductor Emeritus in recognition of his transformative impact on the Orchestra as Principal Conductor from 2007–21.

The Orchestra is based at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall in London, where it has been Resident Orchestra since 1992. Each summer it takes up its annual residency at Glyndebourne Festival Opera where it has been Resident Symphony Orchestra for 60 years. The Orchestra performs at venues around the UK and has made numerous international tours, performing to sell-out audiences in America, Europe, Asia and Australasia.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra made its first recordings on 10 October 1932, just three days after its first public performance. It has recorded and broadcast regularly ever since, and in 2005 established its own record label. These recordings are taken mainly from live concerts given by conductors including those with LPO Principal Conductors from Beecham and Boult, through Haitink, Solti, Tennstedt and Masur, to Jurowski and Gardner.

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**Producer:** Anthony Sellors

**Engineer:** Philip Burwell

**Mastering Engineer:** Andrew Walton

**Executive Producers:**

David Burke, Graham Wood

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