

Elgar *The Dream of Gerontius*:

Full Score Introduction and Performance Notes

Scoring: Hrn. Trpt. T. Tromb. B. Tromb. Perc (1 player) Strings (66442) Organ

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1. The original.

From the age of 16, Elgar worked in his native Worcester as a violinist, organist, bassoonist, conductor and teacher, while also composing. In 1889, he tried to establish himself in London, but moved back to Malvern two years later and gradually established his reputation with choral works such as *The Black Knight* and *Caractacus*. *The Dream of Gerontius* (1900), is among Elgar's more popular works which were mostly all written between 1899 and 1919; namely: *Enigma Variations* and *Sea Pictures* (1899), *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1* (1903), the two symphonies (1908 & 1911), *Violin Concerto* (1910) and the *Cello Concerto* (1919). While all of his works show the influence of the German Romantic composers - Weber, Schumann, Mendelssohn, Brahms and Wagner - they are instantly recognisable as being in a specifically English tradition, later continued by Vaughan Williams, Holst and Walton. The nobility tinged with nostalgia seen in varying degrees in all of the works mentioned above, is often interpreted as evoking British Imperial glory and the rolling hills of the English countryside, but yet at the same time these qualities are part of a personal style of expression created at the end of the Romantic era. Like Rachmaninoff, he was clearly on the conservative wing of composition, even managing to express his disapproval of moderns such as Stravinsky (repeated bass dissonances and ostinati - which foreshadow Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*) and Schoenberg (an inversion of the rising fourths opening of Schoenberg's *First Chamber Symphony*) following the chorus (representing Demons) words "Low born clods of brute earth" - which all come immediately after Gerontius sings of the demons' "*Sour and uncouth a dissonance.*"

Cardinal John Henry Newman's *The Dream of Gerontius* was begun on 17 January 1865, and took 22 days to complete. The poem was dedicated to the memory of John Joseph Gordon, a much loved Oratorian who had died 12 years before, and tells of the death of *Gerontius* (from the Greek for 'old man') and the experience as his Soul approaches God. In January 1887, three years before the cardinal's own passing away in 1890, the poem was offered to Dvorak as a possible basis for a Birmingham commission. However, he wrote his Requiem, according to Elgar, probably because the poem was Newman's visionary expression of fundamental Roman Catholic beliefs and would have aroused too much anti-Catholic prejudice. However, Elgar also said of Gerontius that: *Gerontius is a man like us and not a Priest or a Saint, but a sinner . . . no end of a worldly man in his life, and now brought to book. Therefore I've not filled his part with church tunes and rubbish, but a good healthy full blooded romantic worldliness.* Elgar's own performances were said to be operatic in their dramatic style, and as if to emphasise this view he said of Gerontius' *Sanctus*: Verdi would have been proud to have written this.

Elgar already knew the poem in 1887 when he had lent his copy to Alice Roberts, his future wife, when her mother died in the early summer. Elgar's copy had markings in it transcribed from those made by General Gordon in his own *Gerontius* before his death at Khartoum in January 1885. The association between the poem and the national hero persisted in Elgar's mind. He had thought about composing a Gordon Symphony and throughout 1898 had started to sketch themes for it.

In May 1898, when the possibility arose of a choral work commission for the Birmingham Triennial Festival of 1900, Elgar's first idea was for something on the subject of St Augustine, but this was rejected by the

Birmingham Committee as 'too controversial.' He then considered fulfilling his boyhood ambition of composing a work about the Apostles, but, in the meantime he was already at work on the music of *The Dream of Gerontius*. With Novello dubious about the Gerontius project, along with his both wishing to avoid controversy, and being daunted by compiling a libretto for the Apostles idea alongside the Gerontius project already in hand, Elgar gave up the Festival Commission at the end of 1899. On 1 January 1900, the Chairman of the orchestral subcommittee for the Birmingham Festival, G. H. Johnston, visited Elgar at Malvern and agreement was reached that *The Dream of Gerontius* would be the Festival work, and that Johnston would negotiate financial terms with Novello direct. Thereafter, Elgar continued cutting Newman's original 900 line poem down into the present libretto. Elgar began submitting sections of the vocal score for printing to A. J. Jaeger (Novello's publishing-office manager) from 2 March, and the chorus started learning the work in May. Elgar orchestrated the work throughout the spring and summer, sending it to Jaeger in batches, and completing the scoring (though revisions followed) on 6 June 1900, four days after his 43rd birthday. The first performance, on 3 October 1900 under Hans Richter, was a disaster. In May, the chorus master Swinnerton Heap, who understood Elgar's music, died before rehearsals began and was replaced by the elderly W. C. Stockley, who did not. Like many a Festival Chorus and individual before and since, the Choir took a strong dislike to the music because of its difficulties and apparently made very little effort. Indeed, press reports would appear to show that they sang everything badly at that Festival, and that each of the three soloists was in some respects inadequate to their task. Elgar had pinned many hopes on Gerontius: it represented his Catholic faith, and he knew that it was good; for at the end of the score he had written a quotation from Ruskin:

this is the best of me . . . this I saw and knew: this, if anything of mine, is worth your memory. Not surprisingly, the disastrous première was a crushing blow to Elgar. As early as May 1900, Jaeger had warned Elgar that he could not expect the work to be fully appreciated after only one hearing. In fact the leading critics recognised the exceptional quality of Gerontius in spite of the bad performance and indeed Julius Butts, the German conductor of the Lower Rhine Festival, organised Düsseldorf performances in 1901 and 1902. Following the latter, Richard Strauss acclaimed Elgar as a progressive master. There soon followed a number of more successful English performances and so the work soon became recognised as one of the most important contributions to English choral repertoire of the Twentieth Century. Novello published it as an Oratorio in 1902, although unlike Handel Oratorios for example - each Part is continuous.

2. About this Orchestration.

I first came across the work at the Royal College of Music, as the subject of an extended essay as part of Choral Repertoire studies. I previously knew the 'Cello Concerto - probably introduced to me at a young age on account of my first piano teacher being the late Iris du Pré (Jacqueline's mother) and I also remember buying a recording entitled *Elgar Miniatures* played by the English Chamber Orchestra conducted by Daniel Barenboim. Soon after writing about *The Dream*, I bought the Boult recording on LP (the 86 year old maestro's last choral recording) which has since been played so many times that I recently upgraded to CD. Both my parents already knew the work: my Mother had previously sung in a performance of the (whole?) work with piano accompaniment, while my Father had been chosen to sing in the Semi-Chorus in a full scale performance conducted by the late Maurice Miles. I have dedicated the arrangement to '*Mum & Dad and the A40 Choir*'.

Elgar wrote *The Dream* for the 1900 Birmingham Festival, where he knew that he would have enormous vocal resources and so these were understandably matched by a very large Romantic orchestra - including six trumpets, for example. It was after hearing major London Choirs 'blown out through the back' of première London venues that, in 1999, I came up with the idea of making a reduced orchestration - for strings, organ and brass quartet (French Horn, Trumpet, Tenor Trombone, Bass Trombone) with one percussionist - of the Elgar as well as the Verdi *Requiem*. Given the number of opera's already in reduced orchestra versions and that the Verdi was derided as *an Opera to a Liturgical libretto*, it seemed strange that on checking the Ricordi catalogue there was not already a reduced version. What better way to celebrate the Millennium than to also mark the Centenary of one of the widely acknowledged most important contributions to the English 20th Century Choral repertoire by making *Gerontius* (as one founder A40 Choir member Christened it!) accessible to parochial choirs by making a reduced orchestration which preserves the flavour of the original orchestral colours far better than an organ only accompanied performance. The original is far too large to do properly, with an orchestra adequately balanced within itself, for such choirs but now (in the light of subsequent commonly sung works for example by Britten) the choral writing, while certainly challenging, is not considered overly difficult.

Because Elgar was back in copyright, the idea was placed before the Elgar Will Trust - which included Elgar Scholar Anthony Payne, known for his recent completion of Elgar's *Third Symphony* - for their approval. World-famous music publishers Novello then agreed to make it available for Hire for the Millennium following the A40 Choir's first performance of the new version on 20 November 1999. The broad idea was to reduce the triple woodwind parts onto the organ, split the harp part between strings and organ, and reduce the brass to just four instruments. This is because the real choral sound 'killer' is the solid wall of sound produced by four horns, together with the large string section required to balance a full Romantic Orchestra brass section.

Because of *The Dream's* initial hostile reception, from establishment led prejudice against Roman Catholicism and choral singers complaining about its difficulty, Elgar could not possibly have envisaged the need to make the work accessible to parochial choirs. Elgar was a practical orchestrator and many of his works were written

for amateur musicians, so I am sure he would approve. Furthermore, Elgar himself set a precedent for re-scoring his works to suit circumstances - following the Baroque tradition - in his case to enable his works to be recorded given the considerable restrictions of the new technology at the time. I am hoping that where several choirs have an opportunity to combine with others for a full version, each might decide to repeat the work for their usual seasonal local performance, using the new reduced orchestration - especially as the project has already had publicity on the Elgar Society's Website and Newsletter, as well as the National Federation of Music Society's *Southern Region September 1999 Newsletter*.

I have previously computer set music using the programme *Encore*, but decided that the scale of this project - and the Novello requested approach to it - required the more recent and powerful *Sibelius* programme. Having sketched the organ part on ordinary manuscript, also marking the full score with some preliminary ideas for the brass, and other adjustments (finishing it on holiday in the USA), I then started computer setting in early September. You start by setting the Full Score - the Conductor's music with all the parts together - by playing in the notes on a midi keyboard and then almost by magic extract the individual parts from it. It is this extraction feature which made the project feasible at all. So, the next stage was to add dynamics to the organ part so as to extract it as soon as possible to give Malcolm Hicks maximum time to rehearse it. I sent him the 706 bars of Part 1 after three weeks - at the end of September - and the 1153 bars of Part 2 a month later - making 68 pages in total. Thereafter dynamics were added to all the string and percussion parts, so as to be able to extract them to give to players wanting them in advance - firstly the Violin 1 part (30 pages) for Leader, Lucy Waterhouse, secondly the timpani & percussion parts for Sheila Nolan and then the other string parts in turn. Just prior to extracting the orchestral parts, the Full Scores of Parts 1 & 2 were saved as new files, so as to be able to add cues - small extracts of other parts - useful after long periods of not playing, just before re-entering. (The organ part is so full that cues were not required.) To get used to the Full Score layout myself, I then added dynamics to the vocal parts, so as to be able to print out the 237 A4 pages (1859 bars) of Full Score. Extracting the brass parts completed the whole operation. Another indicator of the scale of the project to those familiar with PC's, is that I probably used two cartridges of ink to print out Full Score (237 pages) & Parts (300 pages and string desk duplications)! In true composers' tradition, the last part was printed at about 18:30 on 18 November 1999 - just two days before the first performance given by the A40 Choir and A40 Sinfonia in the Parish Church of All Saints, High Wycombe on 20 November 1999. Following the first performance, the Full Score and instrumental parts were completely edited to achieve a better spacing.

The première's main artists were:

David Meacock - *conductor*

Leigh Woolf - *mezzo soprano*

Henry Moss - *tenor*

Mark Wildman - *bass*

Malcolm Hicks - *Organ*

A40 Choir

A40 Sinfonia (Lucy Waterhouse *Leader*)

The A40 Sinfonia included Monica Wykes who had taught David Meacock the viola in his youth, but more significantly her father might have sung in early performances of the work.

3. Performance Notes.

This version seeks to retain the flavour of the original but make it viable in non-major venues with modest forces. In broad terms this has been achieved by reducing the brass and woodwind onto organ, horn, trumpet, tenor trombone & bass trombone; percussion to that manageable by one player, and harp split between strings & organ. The string parts have only a few minor changes while the chorus parts are unchanged but for an optional few bars comprising the easily accommodated redistributions set out below. Note by note comparison will obviously reveal all similarities and changes, but for convenience all aspects of modifications needing to be noted for a successful performance are listed below, along with other general observations.

3.1 Chorus.

Possible redistributions

Part 2, Figure 67. A couple of tutti chorus altos could join Semi-Chorus altos here. (not singing 'fence' syllable of defence)

Part 2, Figures 69-70: give original Soprano 3 to some First Altos, who immediately prior to it will sing a crotchet 'ray' for 'reigns' and jump up to the Soprano 3 part. After 'height', jump back to 'and burns' etc..

Part 2, Figures 69 + 5 bars (to Reigns) - Semi-Chorus Altos & tenors, sing tutti lines and substitute intended Semi-Chorus' 'Praises' when they come for whatever tutti are singing.

Part 2, Figures 69 + 6-7 bars, tutti basses sing Semi-Chorus Bass 2 line, then sing a minim a, on beat 2, of Fig. 69 + 8 bar to the word 'Praise'.

Part 2, Figures 86-87 + 3: give original Soprano 3 to some First Altos

Part 2, Figure 134 + 3 bars. Some of tutti chorus could join Semi-Chorus here.

Semi-Chorus

The original score suggests 5 Sops (3 1, 2 II), 5 Altos (3 1, 2 II), 4 Tens & 4 Basses. Choirs using this smaller version could get away with 5 Sops, 4 Altos, 3 Tens & 3 basses if they all know what they are doing, and make a good sound individually. However much we conductors encourage everyone to know their part, it is a fact of life that amateur choirs will nearly always have 'Chieftains & Indians' in each part: therefore, be careful not to leave the main chorus short of 'leaders', by perhaps only having one Chieftain on each Semi Chorus Part with good "second team" singers. Be open about this tactic so that the main Chorus Chieftains will not feel slighted, but rather that they have an equally if not more important role within the main chorus.

Here is a list of the Semi-Chorus passages

Part 1

Fig. 29-30 & 32-33: alone, 4 parts - so can be more than core SC

Fig 64-65: unison, answered by full choir

Fig 65 - 1 bar: harmony (Fig. 65 + 3 doubles full choir)

Fig. 74 + 1 to 75: against 4 part tutti choir

Fig. 75-76: against 8 part tutti choir

Fig. 76 + 3 -78 + 6: against 4 part tutti, then doubling tutti to end of Part 1.

Part 2

Fig. 60-68: SC Sop & Alto against split tutti Sops & Altos

Fig. 68-71: SATB SC versus 6 part tutti (SSATTB) - but a certain amount of doubling between the Choirs, even though not consistently between one pair of parts

Fig. 115-116: against 4 part tutti choir

Fig. 134 + 2 - 135 SC Sops & Altos alone (Altos split in 2!)

Fig. 135 + 3 - end SC split Sops & Altos against tutti Choir, but apart from two bars before Fig. 37 are doubling other parts.

General Chorus observations.

Smaller Choirs daunted by the seeming number of parts, can be usefully reassured by being shown how much doubling there actually is: e.g.. Part 2 Figs. 99-101 mostly starts off as SATBB, and soon goes to SATB - but with Sops & Tens versus Altos & Basses there are only two real linear parts here, not eight! The other point to be made is that the homophonic basis of diatonic music, the triad chord, contains three notes, while 'colourful additions' might sometimes make that four. It therefore follows that there are still only three or four notes in the chord, even if the Choir is split into eight!

Beware of taking the *Demons' Chorus* too fast, as firstly the organ part is quite full here. Secondly, the faster the tempo, the less vowel length on each note, so the choir will tend to produce less volume the faster it goes. Chorus gets the first entry notes at Fig. 44 off the ascending bass line in the previous two bars. Often in the *Demons' Chorus* and elsewhere, short lines can be made easier by asking singers to actually sing the vocal or orchestral line just before their own entry in rehearsal - which they then sing 'mentally' in performance. Indeed Figs. 89-95 are full of half lines, or in other words lines split between the two choirs which if seen as a whole make more sense - the two bass lines being the most obvious extended example here. The contrast between the slurred *Ha Ha's* and the separate unslurred ones - explained in the Vocal Score introduction - and the general intended demonic nastiness of this section, can be heightened by the use of a Spanish pinched 'aa' vowel sound, rather than open 'ah', for the separate ha ha's.

3.2. Soloists.

While many oratorios can be rehearsed and performed on the usual three hour rehearsal without piano rehearsals with soloists, this is not the case with *The Dream of Gerontius*. Because of the flexibility of tempo and rubato within phrasing which is fundamental to capturing the Elgar style, it is absolutely essential to have a piano rehearsal with at least *Gerontius* (tenor) before coming before the orchestra. In this through-composed work, both the conductor and *Gerontius* must come to a mutual understanding as to the pacing of the whole work, and how the various sections join together. The conductor's role is different from an oratorio made up of a succession of movements, which in often not having to be as tightly related from a tempo point of view allow for greater variety of tempos to suit soloists' individual preferences. The tenor part is vocally demanding, and putting this piece together on just a three hour rehearsal, while possible, is tight enough having done spadework at the piano beforehand. (It goes without saying that the chorus need to be really on top of their parts too - no time for last minute fixing!) Take time to sort out the duet at the start of Part 2 - after sending the chorus home to recover for the performance.

3.3 Brass Parts.

Richard Strauss once said: "*Don't even look at the brass. They're already too loud!*" Where horn solos have been deliberately retained (to maintain the right balance with other forces) the other three players playing the role of supporting horns may need to be persuaded to display their own skill and finesse by allowing such solos to come through - since horns are weaker in tone than trumpets and trombones. Seating the horn player facing the audience, and the others at a slight angle (so that they are tending to blow across the orchestra rather than straight at the audience) is an old trick which will help the blend of sound. Incidentally, following the modern

horn player's generally preferred practice, the horn part has been noted in F, with key signature (though an alternative is available for those players preferring the old convention).

3.4 Organ Part

In addition to what appears in the original, this covers the wind and harp parts. Registration has been kept to a minimum as instruments can be very varied. It is assumed that, unless otherwise indicated pedal notes will usually be with both 8 & 16 foot pitches. The two styles of notation found are deliberate: ft for foot indicates that this is part of this arrangement (e.g.: 4ft), and necessary to capture the original orchestral 'registration', while the dash abbreviation (e.g.: 32') indicates that this is Elgar's instruction transferred from the original. The ft indications are to ensure that orchestral lines are fully covered: for example, the 4ft sometimes covers high orchestral flutes. In order to guide organists as to timbre, original instruments have been indicated in brackets - particularly where these were originally solo lines. Some solo lines may need to be played louder than the original dynamic markings might indicate, as an orchestral player would do naturally seeing solo indicated. Sometimes where the pedal line doubles the LH manual stave, organists might (if the pedals have adequate clarity) rearrange this type of passage to take this line entirely in the pedals and split the upper manual stave between the two hands - e.g. Part 1, bar 310-14 & at Fig. 59 - by coupling pedals and manuals.

3.5 Percussion.

The percussion parts have been reduced so as to be playable by one player (though there is no reason why the part cannot be simplified with more than one player if more are freely available). Firstly, a small orchestra does not require as much, and secondly, one of the aims of this version is to help minimise promotion costs by only using bare essentials: better to have an extra string player playing nearly all the time, than spend the same money on an additional percussionist who only plays for a few bars!

The original Full Score specifies three timpani, tuned to G, A, and d. However, as most players nowadays have (or access to) two pedal timpanis, additional notes have been added on this basis. Occasionally pizzicato Double Bass has been transferred to the Timpani part - *ppp!* - signified by both *pizz* and *ppp* markings together.

Percussion Instruments Required.

Timpani (2 pedal), suspended Cymbal (or cymbals if more than one player), triangle, Tamburo piccolo, Tamtam, Glockenspiel & hand-bells. It goes without saying that this variety of instruments being played by one player needs to be carefully choreographed. The Tamtam is sometimes faked on a suspended cymbal if none is available or space is limited.

3.6 Strings.

The minimum recommended number - because of the divisi parts - is 6 6 4 4 2. This number will be adequate for any choir of up to 100 singers. Larger choirs may want to add more. An experienced leader with a feeling for romantic phrasing and all which makes Elgar's string style (including tasteful *portamento*) is very useful.

Sometimes there is a debate as to whether the second violins should be seated to the right of a conductor. Given the reduced numbers, and often short rehearsal time, it is probably advisable to retain the now more familiar seating which places 'cellos to the conductor's right. Those who wish to claim Elgar's own practice as justification for doing otherwise would be wise to remember the well documented facts that in the early recordings, the orchestra seating was totally rearranged, and Elgar even re-scored passages to allow the works to be performed by the smaller number of musicians due to size of room restrictions imposed by early recording technology: Elgar was a pragmatist, not a dogmatist!

3.7 Slurs

There are a number of instances where the first of two tied notes has a slur going to it, indicating that it is a last note of a phrase or bowing; and the second tied note is indicated as being the start of a new phrase or bowing. (e.g. viola, Part 1, Bars 392-3 and Part 2 Tenor Trombone bars 783-4). The idea is that the tied note is "hooked in" to whichever bowing slur is convenient - the tie is paramount. Some conductors would even encourage a phased bow change to maintain a sustained string sound by not having all bow changes in such passages happening simultaneously. Elsewhere this notation could be interpreted as indicating sub-phrases shown tonally, but not with a silence (e.g. Part 2, Fig. 97 - incidentally this is different from Fig 96, so Elgar obviously intended a difference of articulation between these two versions of the same note pattern). Thus, the seeming contradiction from an articulation point of view disappears if the slur is viewed as a phrase rather than articulation mark. The loose use of slurs was obviously a tradition towards the end of the Nineteenth Century: according to Marie-Claire Alain, in her introductory notes to her Erato recording entitled *Frank's Great Organ Works*, Frank also left it to the discretion of the good organist to decide which notes are tied or not.

4. Acknowledgements.

I gratefully acknowledge advice enthusiastically and freely given by colleagues throughout this project.

April 2001.

Other's comments about these Elgar & Verdi reduced orchestrations.

Many thanks for your excellent reduced orchestration of the Verdi Requiem. Our performance was spectacularly successful, thanks in part to your fine work in creating this version. You have paved the way for many who would not otherwise have had the chance to perform this towering masterpiece. . . You have done a marvellous job with your reduced orchestration, and you have done a great service to the choral community, both in the U.K. and elsewhere. I hope that my discovery and use of your Verdi orchestration will lead to more performances in the U.S.

Dr. Glenn R. Gregg, Music Director Kirkland Choral Society

- conductor of the USA 1st performance on 19 May 2007

a well conceived idea, intelligently realised Peter Barley, Verdi 1st perf. organist

As a 'cellist in the BBC SO for 21 years . . . I have played [Verdi Requiem] dozens of times . . . much of the time I was not particularly conscious of any difference from the original. Peter Freyan

unambiguously successful

Review of Elgar 1st perf., John Norris, Elgar Society Council Member

agreeably surprised by the skill & sympathy . . . whilst maintaining the essential flavour of the original score . . . a wider array of amateur choral singers may now enjoy the experience of singing in his wonderful piece which hitherto has perhaps been the preserve of those with access to larger and more expensive orchestras.

Mark Wildman, Head of Vocal Studies at RAM, and Bass soloist in Elgar 1st perf..

Some were understandably sceptical when initially eyeing the line-up, but were pleasantly surprised upon hearing the performances. Typical is Richard Cartmale, the Verdi 1st performance. tenor soloist who was released from ENO at less than 48 hours notice, who also has experience of 19th Century Operatic repertoire as orchestral player and conductor:

Essentially he has ingeniously reduced the size of the brass section and re-assigned all the woodwind parts onto organ] . . . I have to say that this works remarkably well, indeed far better than I might have expected.

a useful and interesting new version . . . well written for the organ Malcolm Hicks, Elgar 1st perf. Organist

Just to say how very impressed I was with how your reduced orchestration worked for the performance by Yorkshire Philharmonic Choir in April 2014. Having conducted the work in the full orchestral form dozens of times, I was quite apprehensive about how the reduced forces could work, and how well I could learn and memorise the new scoring. I need not have worried, for it worked beautifully, and with a discerning audience also impressed with the results. I have received letters from all 3 soloists and orchestral members who greatly enjoyed the experience too. So, all in all this was a very fine performance, enjoyed by all. Andrew Padmore (Conductor & Artistic Director of Yorkshire Philharmonic Choir, Harrogate Choral Society and Yorkshire Voices).

I am writing to let you know [following the Welsh premiere , June 2015] that the concert was a success and enjoyed by all who took part and all who came to listen. The scores were great! Librarian, Gower Chorale

very fair representation of the originals . . . an excellent way of being able to perform the pieces with smaller forces and in venues which would be unable to accommodate a full size performance.

Sheila Nolan, Head of Percussion Surrey Youth Music & Performing Arts

Last year, [July 2002] I thought doing the Verdi Requiem was ambitious, but having recently heard the full version of The Dream of Gerontius, I couldn't begin to imagine how the London Oratory School Choir would be able to begin to perform such a huge work, let alone do so, so convincingly; thanks to all involved.

Words the Principal of the London Oratory School spoke to the audience immediately after the School's July 2003 *Gerontius* performance

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or to initiate discussion of your requirements.**