

# The Dream of Gerontius. The Best of Me.

**A Gerontius Centenary Companion**  
edited by Geoffrey Hodgkins.

The apocryphal history of Gerontius is well known - how Elgar's late completion of the vocal score, the Birmingham choirmaster's untimely death and the failure of his replacement to appreciate the complexity of the work led to an under-rehearsed première which the critics panned. Fortunately, a German choirmaster in the audience recognised the work's considerable merits and arranged a subsequent performance in Dusseldorf which single-handedly rescued the work from oblivion. But how accurate is this snapshot? What followed Düsseldorf? How widely accepted is the oratorio today? And how important was the poem to Newman's reputation before Elgar chose to set it?

*The Best of Me* is the first book to attempt to provide a complete history of Gerontius from Cardinal Newman to the present day. Articles previously published in the Elgar Society Journal have been updated and, where appropriate, expanded. New chapters provide a biographical portrait of Newman and his writing of the epic poem, a pictorial tour of the Worcestershire countryside that provided Elgar with the inspiration to compose his masterpiece and a final chapter which reviews the status Gerontius has achieved in the world today. Learned analyses of the structure of Gerontius are juxtaposed with historical cartoon illustrations of Newman's words. In total, the text is supplemented by some ninety illustrations and additional material from a variety of sources. A full contents list can be found elsewhere on this website.

With contributors including Elgar biographer Michael Kennedy, eminent musicologist Lewis Foreman and a number of leading authorities from within the Elgar Society, this is a book that should interest the academic and the general reader alike - a pleasure to read as well as a valuable reference source. It makes an ideal present for anyone who has performed the work, and will enhance the pleasure of the many more who simply enjoy listening to it. With a recommended retail price of £18.00, we believe the 384-page book represents excellent value for money. But, despite this, to celebrate the launch of what we are confident will prove to be a long-running and highly successful enterprise and in recognition of the important part this website has made in broadening the appeal of the Society, we are offering the book at a special discount price of £17.00, inclusive of postage and packing, to those within Europe ordering the book by credit card through the website. (Please note that, for delivery outside Europe, we add a further £2.50 towards postage, except for the Far East and Australasia, for which we add an additional £3.00). Follow these links to the Elgar Editions order form.