

Edward Elgar

**The Dream of
Gerontius**

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PART ONE

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.

Assistants (Choir)

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.

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.

Assistants (Choir)

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.

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.
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.

Assistants (Choir)
 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.

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

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!

(Choir)
 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

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!

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.

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.

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 judgment 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.
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. Hist
to their cry!

Soul
How sour and how uncouth a
dissonance!

Demons (Choir)
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.

Demons (Choir)
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;
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,
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!

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 Masters 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. . .

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.

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
My soul is in my hand: I have
no fear, -
But hark! a grand mysterious
harmony:
It floods me, like the deep and
solemn souls
Of many waters.

Angel
And now the threshold, as we
traverse it,
Utters aloud its glad
responsive chant.

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!

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.

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.

Soul

I go before my Judge. . .

Voices on Earth (Choir)
Be merciful, be gracious; spare
him, Lord, Be merciful, be
gracious; Lord, deliver him.

Angel

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

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 possess
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.

Souls in Purgatory (Choir)

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. Bring us not, Lord, very
low: for Thou hast said,
Come back again, O Lord!
how long: and be entreated for
Thy servants.

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 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, etc. Amen

Choir of Angelicals

Praise to the Holiest, etc. Amen.