

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra: Lighthouse, Poole

8:46am Thursday 17th November 2011

By Mike Marsh »

The Dream of Gerontius; a mystical journey from deathbed to eternity in words from the eponymous poem by Cardinal Newman and set with inspired Catholic conviction by Elgar.

This performance by the Bournemouth Symphony Chorus, just touching its centenary, must be counted among its finest achievements. Under David Hill's stirring direction the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra pitched a potent introduction scaling the forthcoming drama. The opening gambit from Peter Hoare as Gerontius immediately impressed with great vocal character and in the Sanctus conveyed a galvanising sense of drama.

During the first part the Assistants in chorus produced a superb blend of subtlety and beauty of line and with The Priest, formidably portrayed by Iain Paterson, sent Gerontius on his way.

Soothing strings evoked Newman's imaginative vision of Gerontius' soul on its passage in the arms of his guiding Angel, sung with germane gentility by Jennifer Johnston, leading him happily onwards.

Nothing prepared us for the heinous, cackling devilry of evil laughs from the chorus of Demons; a corpus of supremely well organised chaos in scathing song.

This journey to the Judgement Day was scorchingly fulfilled and en-route the magnificent BSC and soli, along with sumptuous playing from the orchestra, elevated Elgar's choral masterpiece with Elysian musicianship.