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EASTBOURNE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

CONGRESS THEATRE
EASTBOURNE

CHORAL CONCERT

Sunday, 13th March, 1994
at 8 p.m.

Eastbourne College Choral Society
Eastbourne Symphony Chorus

**SOLOISTS :- NEIL JENKINS
RACHEL COOPER
MARTIN ELLIOTT**

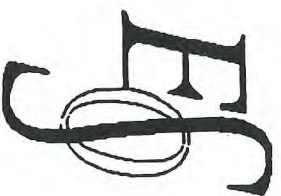
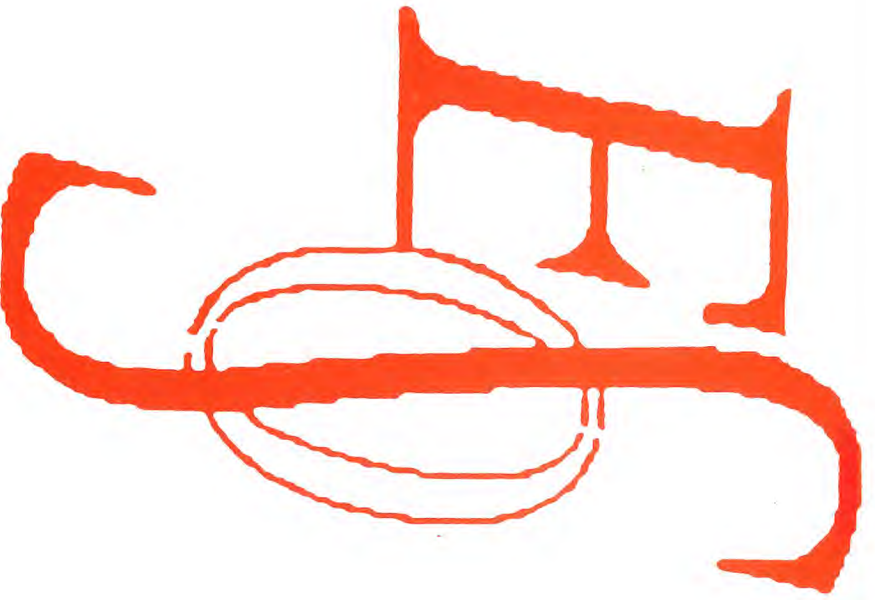
**CONDUCTOR : GRAHAM JONES
LEADER : LISA WIGMORE**

Supported by :



SOUTH-EAST ARTS





Reg. Charity

Founded in 1979 and formerly known as the Eastbourne Sinfonia, the **Eastbourne Symphony Orchestra** now numbers in excess of 70 players who come from all over the South East Region, though mainly from Eastbourne and the surrounding area. It performs four Concerts a year and organises a prestigious Young Musicians' Award Competition. For this Choral Concert, the Orchestra is delighted to welcome soloists, Neil Jenkins, Rachel Cooper and Martin Elliott, along with the Eastbourne Symphony Chorus and Eastbourne College Choral Society.

Choral Concerts on this scale have been part of the Eastbourne musical scene for many years when local singers and an outside orchestra, hired at no little expense (funded by Eastbourne College and the Friends of Eastbourne College Choral Society) performed some of the great works. More recently, in 1983, the Wind Ensemble from the then Eastbourne Sinfonia put on a concert of music by Purcell and Bruckner with the Tudor Singers in St. Saviours Church with Graham Jones conducting. This was the beginning of the liaison between Eastbourne's own future Symphony Orchestra and local singers. St. Saviours was the venue for the next three years during which time Southbourne Choir joined the Tudor Singers and in 1986 the Choral Concert included Mozart's Requiem.

1987 saw the first Choral Concert back in the Congress Theatre and many more local (and some not so local) singers, as well as students from Eastbourne College and other schools, came together to sing Verdi's Requiem; the Choral Concert, with the Eastbourne Symphony Orchestra and an ever increasing number of singers, was again an established part of the annual musical calendar. Carina Burana, Orff, Beethoven's 9th Symphony (Choral), Sea Symphony, Vaughan Williams, The Creation, Haydn, Brahms' Requiem and then Verdi's Requiem again in 1993 are followed this year by one of the all time greats of English Choral Music.

By special request, a professional photographer will discreetly take some photographs.
To reduce costs, this programme has been produced at minimal expense.



SOUTH-EAST ARTS

The E.S.O. registered as a charity in 1987 and, in the past, the Eastbourne Borough Council have allotted a substantial grant each year in recognition of the Orchestra's contribution to the life of the community. South East Arts recognises the Orchestra's value to the area, and financial support is received annually from this quarter.

NEIL JENKINS - TENOR

Neil Jenkins was born at St. Leonards-on-Sea and received his musical education as a Chorister at Westminster Abbey, a Choral Scholar at King's College, Cambridge, and completed his studies at the Royal College of Music, where he won several major prizes.

He has sung a wide variety of operatic roles with Scottish Opera, Welsh National Opera, Kent Opera, New Sadlers Wells Opera and New Sussex Opera. Abroad, he has sung in Venice, Florence, Tours, Lyon and at the Israel and Madrid Festivals.

He is equally in demand as a concert singer and has sung with all the leading London and regional orchestras. At Easter 1993 he sang the Evangelist in the St. Matthew Passion for Sir David Willcocks and the Bach Choir at the Royal Festival Hall. His performances of Gerontius throughout the British Isles are receiving much critical acclaim. "Neil Jenkins, who has given opera lovers so many memorable performances, is no stranger to the role. He wrung every ounce of emotion out of Elgar's passionate music" (Brighton Evening Argus).

In January 1993, he took part in the BBC Janacek Festival at the Barbican. He has just completed a new recording of the Britten Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings (to mark its 50th Anniversary) with the Berlin-based Oriol Ensemble.

RACHEL COOPER - ALTO

Rachel Cooper comes from the Isle of Axholme in Lincolnshire. After studying with Marjorie Thomas at the Royal Academy of Music, where she won numerous prizes, she was then awarded a bursary to further her study at the Royal College of Music Opera School.

Alongside her many performances throughout Great Britain, her solo career has included numerous appearances abroad, most notably in Germany, France, Spain and the Netherlands. She is no stranger to venues such as the Royal Albert Hall and the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, and is equally at home on TV and radio.

Her repertoire includes all the major oratorios and covers music from the early Renaissance to the present day. She has worked with a number of 20th century composers, including Penderecki and Lutoslawski and is a founder member of the new solo vocal ensemble "The Academy of Vocal Arts".

MARTIN ELLIOTT - BASS/BARITONE

Martin Elliott was born in London and educated as a chorister of Westminster Abbey and as a Choral Scholar at Christ Church, Oxford, where he gained an honours degree in Philosophy, Politics and Economics. He continued his vocal studies as a post-graduate scholar on the opera course at the Guildhall School of Music in London and now studies with the opera singer, Norman Bailey.

He made his London solo debut in 1985 at the Barbican Hall with the London Symphony Orchestra and has since performed in Paris and Oslo, and the BBC Promenade Concerts in London. Along with his concert engagements, Martin has performed bass roles in the baroque stage-works of Handel, Purcell, Greene and Caldara.

He is the founder and director of a recently formed vocal ensemble, the Wren Baroque Soloists. The ensemble recently made its concert debut at the Northern Lights Festival in Troms, Norway. They will be making three recordings this year of music by Caldara, as well as by early English Madrigalists.

His engagements for this year include singing Bachmanninov's Spring Cantata, 2 separate performances of Elgar's Dream of Gerontius, as well as Christus in Bach's St. Matthew Passion, the Messiah and Mozart's Vespers.

GRAHAM JONES - CONDUCTOR

Graham Jones, brought up in Norfolk and educated at Gresham's School, Holt, is a graduate from Durham University where he was an Organ Scholar. He first conducted an orchestra at the age of 16 and went on to gain much conducting experience at University.

He came to Eastbourne in 1976 to join the Music Department at Eastbourne College and, in 1991, was appointed its Director of Music. He was co-founder of the Eastbourne Sinfonia and has been the Orchestra's Musical Director since its inception in 1979 and has also conducted all its Choral Concerts. During the past fifteen years he has been privileged to work with some of the country's leading soloists.

His inspiration comes from a belief in the value of a community orchestra; he also has a great love for choral music.

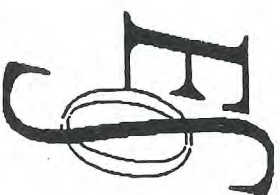
EDWARD ELGAR 1857 - 1934

The Dream of Gerontius, Op 38

This work had its first performance at the Birmingham Festival of 1900, but "performance" may be too strong a word, for it was badly rehearsed and hardly comprehended by most of the performers and listeners. Yet Elgar on finishing it could write without boastfulness: "This is the best of me"; and this, despite subsequent masterworks, has remained the opinion of many.

The opening prelude is a successive experience of leading themes wonderfully scored, especially in the highly elaborate string parts and in the writing for low flutes when those strings are muted to begin the uneasy bereuse representing the fitful sleep of Gerontius on his death-bed.

Conspicuous in the opening solo is the very soft multiple division of the strings - once into no fewer than eighteen parts - for the "emplying out of each constituent and natural force". The first choral sound is the prayer of Gerontius's friends: "Kyrie Eleison" on the unaccompanied semi-chorus, with the main chorus soberly accompanied by divided violas and cellos, amplifying the prayer with their petitions. The solo in the first part is Gerontius's "Santus fortis" ranging through many moods and serving both as prayer and declaration of faith. Within it are heard not only the multiple-strings "disintegration" chords but also a presentiment of the devilish music of the second part. The graphic silence at Gerontius's death speaks for itself. It is broken by the trombones and the bass-solo priest wending the soul on its way with the injunction "Proficiscere anima Christiana", an idea taken up in stately climax by the full power of chorus and orchestra, then going on in an ascending, consoling march towards the next world, with the opening prayer almost the last thing to be heard.



Part II begins with a tender evocation by muted strings of the new world in which Gerontius finds himself. The "heart-subduing melody" that he hears is a preface of the Angel's "alleluia" refrain, which in its turn has its own beautiful refrain on the horns. The opening "question and answer" dialogue of Gerontius and his guardian angel leads to a number of ever-bigger musical paragraphs: first a euphonious duet ("a preface falls upon me"), then the extended and bitter snarls of the demons in chorus, and to cap it all, the tremendous apotheosis of Newman's great hymn "Praise to the Holiest". Shortly after its close comes the intercession of the Angel of the Agony, with soft Wagnerian brass in its accompaniment. Thereafter there is the searing exposure to God's glance where at Elgar's direction every instrument must for one moment exert its fullest force. The work reaches its serene end with the Angel's farewell to the soul of Gerontius as it is consigned to purgatory ("Softly and gently"). The Angel's solo is combined with prayers on earth and the angelic voices singing "Praise to the Holiest" in the distant height.

(I.K. These notes were supplied through the Programme Note Bank of the N.F.M.S.)



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