

GERONTIUS NEWSLETTER No. 1

Dear Singer

This Newsletter is being sent to you because you have signed up to sing Elgar's Dream of Gerontius with the South Cotswold Big Sing Group in Gloucester Cathedral at 7pm on Saturday June 11th 2016 and to bring you up to date with progress and also to remind you of various personnel, rehearsal times etc.

1. Conductor

The Conductor for the performance will be well known Kings Singer, broadcaster and conductor Brian Kay. Those who were lucky enough to attend Brian's Workshop on the work last year will know what a stimulating day he made of the study of the work and his incomparable knowledge of Elgar's writing.

2. Rehearsal Conductors

There will be a total of ten rehearsals and an all-day Workshop. Four of these rehearsals will be taken by Steven Kings, conductor of Monmouth and Thornbury Choral Societies in Alveston near Thornbury and four by Christopher Swain, conductor of Wycliffe Choral Society at Wycliffe. The all-day Workshop, an eve-of-concert rehearsal on June 10th and afternoon day-of-concert rehearsal will be taken by Brian Kay himself.

3. Orchestra

We will be accompanied by the well known Regency Sinfonia Orchestra

4. Soloists

Our soloists will be soprano Diana Moore, tenor Philip Lloyd Holtam and baritone Quentin Hayes. Philip sang in the South Cotswold Choral Group's first performance, the Verdi Requiem in Tewkesbury Abbey and will be taking the part of Gerontius.

5. The Singers

This, of course, is yourselves! So far we have 135 taking part and you are urged, wherever possible to attend as many rehearsals as possible, particularly the Workshop and the eve-of-concert rehearsal. Absolute authority rests with Brian Kay and he may ask people to stand down if he feels their performance is deleterious to the overall sound quality. The semi-chorus parts will be sung by singers from Brian Kay's Burford Singers who have performed the work several times with him before.

6. The Score

From every point of view Gerontius is a wonderful work to sing, one of which is that any Novello score will do so if you have a really old brown and buff copy belonging to your grandmother it is just as valid as the latest version.

7. Basic Rehearsals

There are two venues for the basic rehearsals as follows. Rehearsals will last two hours including a juice break:-

On May 17th, 24th, 31st and June 7th Christopher Swain will take rehearsals at Wycliffe Preparatory School Performing Arts Centre at 7.30pm

On May 19th, 26th, June 2nd and 9th Steven Kings will take rehearsals at Alveston Methodist Church, Alveston, BS35 3QY at 7.30pm.

8. Workshop

There will be an all day Workshop to be taken by Brian Kay on Saturday June 4th at The Marling School, Cainscross Road, Stroud GL5 4HE. This will run from 10am – 5pm and Philip Lloyd Holtam will be present for several hours to sing the tenor part. Everyone singing with us is urged to attend.

9. Eve-of-concert Rehearsals

There will be an eve-of-concert rehearsal at The Marling School, Cainscross Road, Stroud GL5 4HE. This will run from 7.30pm – 9.30pm and attendance is mandatory. This will be the opportunity for Brian to set the layout and for the Concert Manager and Assistant Concert Manager to work on plans to get on and off the stage. If for reasons of death, fire or flood you cannot possibly make this rehearsal it is absolutely essential that you advise the Concert Manager David Joyce (Tel. 01454-260542, email: davidjoyce@doctors.org.uk) and appoint someone from your voice part to reserve a space for you.

Full directions to these venues will follow in Newsletter No. 2

10. Concert Day

Rehearsals will start in Gloucester Cathedral at 1pm on Saturday 11th June. The early start is to accommodate Evensong. Plans for the evening concert will follow in due course in a later Newsletter. Spacious changing facilities have been arranged.

11. Choir representatives

This event is being sponsored by four choirs from the South Cotswold Choral Group, namely Stroud, Thornbury, Tyndale and Wycliffe Choral Societies. If you are a member of one of these societies and have any queries please contact your own choir representative in the first instance as follows:-

Stroud Choral Society – Ian Stewart
Thornbury Choral Society – Alison Makepeace
Tyndale Choral Society – Catherine Bennett
Wycliffe Choral Society – Rosemary Robinson

If you are not a member of one of the four constituent societies and have any queries please contact myself, Jos Gregson (tel. 01454-411652, email jos@josgregson.plus.com)

12. Tickets

Putting on a concert of this size is a hugely expensive operation and although the costs are being most generously underwritten we do look on you, the singers, to help shift a lot of tickets. These will be priced at £25 for front nave, £20 for centre nave, £15 for rear nave and £8 for aisle seats. We will be getting the tickets printed by the Gloucester Cathedral Box Office in early March and choir representatives will be supplied with a selection from each price band to sell. The tickets will be numbered.

13. Website

Our Website Manager Mike Elcock will make every effort to keep the website up to date with all the latest information and you are urged to log on to www.sccg.info to see if the information that interests you is already posted. The Newsletters will be posted on the site as they are issued so if you lose yours you can always obtain a copy.

14. Advertising

A fully illustrated programme will be produced and supplied free to every singer, every member of the orchestra and every member of the audience. We already have a number of advertisers signed up we but can always use more. If you know any firm which might be interested in advertising in the programme please contact me in the first instance.

Jos Gregson

Chairman South Cotswold Big Sing

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