

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Pappano: Elgar's The Dream of Gerontius

Tuesday, April 21, 2026 · 19:00 · Barbican

Antonio Pappano, conductor · David Butt Philip, tenor · Emily D'Angelo, mezzo-soprano · William Thomas, bass · London Symphony Chorus, choir
approximately 95 minutes

Edward Elgar

1857–1934

95 minutes

The Dream of Gerontius, Op. 38

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The work falls into two parts. **Part I** takes place at Gerontius's deathbed: listen for the hushed, mysterious orchestral Prelude that lays out the main leitmotifs you will hear throughout. The tenor (Gerontius) sings of his fear and faith as death approaches (listen for the great outpouring 'Sanctus fortis,' his profession of belief), while the chorus of friends prays around him, and the bass (the Priest) finally sends his soul on its way with the noble 'Proficiscere, anima Christiana' ('Go forth, Christian soul').

Part II is set in the world beyond. Listen for the magical change of atmosphere as the Soul awakes, weightless and wondering, accompanied by the serene mezzo-soprano (the Angel) who guides him. Listen for the snarling, sneering chorus of **Demons** (a brilliant, biting fugal episode); for the radiant '**Praise to the Holiest in the height,**' the work's great choral climax, a tremendous hymn of praise; for the bass's awe-struck 'Angel of the Agony'; and for the overwhelming orchestral blaze at the instant the Soul glimpses God, followed by its anguished, transformed cry. Finally, listen for the Angel's tender farewell, the 'Softly and gently,' as the Soul is laid to rest in Purgatory and the music dies away in consolation and peace. Throughout, follow the interplay of the three soloists, the great chorus (here the London Symphony Chorus) and Elgar's glowing, Wagnerian orchestra, and surrender to one of the most moving spiritual journeys in all music.



CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/lso-2026-04-21-pappano>

Version 3, 30 September 2026