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Auty/Breedt/Hancock/Collegium Vocale Gent/Royal Flemish  
PO/De Waart  
(Pentatone, two CDs)

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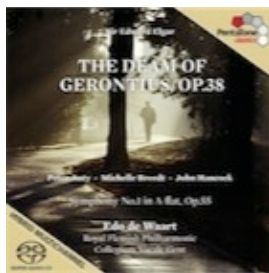


**Andrew Clements**

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A rare European take on Elgar ... Edo de Waart. Photograph: Jesse Willems



**Edward Elgar**  
**Elgar: The Dream of Gerontius Op. 38**  
Royal Flemish  
Philharmonic/Edo de  
Waart  
Pentatone Classics

2013

Recordings of the greatest 20th-century British choral work from elsewhere in Europe are unusual, so this Antwerp-sourced version, with Edo de Waart conducting the Royal Flemish Philharmonic and the superb chorus of the Collegium Vocale Gent, is welcome on rarity grounds alone. But rather than offering a fresh, detached perspective on Elgar, the striking thing about this performance is how English it seems, not only in the Gerontius himself – Peter Auty has a bit too much the familiar pinched English tenor sound – but in Michelle Breedt's soupy, vibrato-laden mezzo Angel. Baritone John Hancock, paler toned than many in this work, is more convincing, but in both the oratorio and Elgar's First Symphony, which takes up the rest of the second disc, De Waart's rather sluggish tempi undermine the drama; it's too reverential, never operatic enough.