Heritage Lottery Fund awards £1.4million to mark Benjamin Britten’s centenary

25/07/2011

This award will support the redevelopment of ‘The Red House’ where Benjamin Britten lived and worked with his partner Peter Pears from 1957 until his death in 1976. Britten is one of the UK’s most celebrated 20th century composers and it was at his home in Aldeburgh, Suffolk that he created many of his most important and famous works, including Noyes Fludde and the War Requiem.

Since the death of Peter Pears in 1986, the Red House, and its collections have been cared for by the Britten Pears Foundation. These include an archive containing Britten’s manuscripts, correspondence and photographs, the eclectic art collection Britten and Pears put together over 50 years and original designs for set and costumes.

Timed to celebrate Britten’s 100th birthday in 2013, the project will create a new educational space and fund a learning officer who will lead workshops and outreach activities for local schools, allowing even greater public access to this remarkable collection.

Britten’s composing studio will be restored, and the library next to it revitalised, creating larger gallery space for a free introductory exhibition. A Britten Trail will also be established that will explore the influence the Red House, the surrounding Suffolk landscape and the local community had on the composer’s work.

Alex Jennings, actor currently playing Benjamin Britten at the National Theatre, said: "Whilst preparing to play Benjamin Britten in Alan Bennett's *The Habit of Art* at the National Theatre, I was fortunate enough to stay at his former home, the Red House, and it’s easy to see how this magical place inspired him and his work. The presence of Britten and Peter Pears is tangible. It is fantastic news that the Heritage Lottery Fund is supporting this project that will help more people than ever enjoy the legacy of this great composer.”

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, said: “Throughout his life, Benjamin Britten pioneered the idea that music-making should not be the preserve of the privileged few, but should involve people from across the community - whether they be amateur or professional, adult or child. It is this idea that is carried forward with this project, creating new opportunities for everyone to explore, learn about and enjoy the wonderful legacy of Britten’s work and collections.”

Richard Jarman, General Director of Britten Pears Foundation: “As momentum builds ahead of Britten's centenary in 2013, we are delighted that HLF is backing our plans to introduce new audiences to the man and his music. Britten's journey - from Lowestoft schoolboy to the twentieth century's consummate musician - is such an engaging one, and his music includes some of the most appealing classical works of the twentieth century. With HLF's generous help we will now be able to open up The Red House and its fascinating collections as never before, and to link them to the Suffolk communities and landscapes that inspired Britten throughout his life.”

Britten is the most performed British composer, and together the holdings at Red House represent the most comprehensive single composer archive in the world. The 2013 centenary presents an unrepeatable opportunity to transform the internationally important Red House so that it can be accessed and enjoyed by all.

Notes to editors

A confirmed award means that money had already been earmarked by HLF for the project in question and that the full amount has now been secured.

Further information

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