First World War music project prompts twinning letter links

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Pupils at Becket Primary and Arboretum Junior schools are among the young people who have been working with the orchestra and with choreographer Tom Dale, for the arts project entitled '***Dark Clouds are Smouldering into Red***' – portraying the human emotions of soldiers and their families during the war through music and dance. They will perform their work alongside Sinfonia Viva at a public concert at Derby's Assembly Rooms on Tuesday March 4.

The pupils from the two primary schools as well as students from Derby Moor Community Sports College and Derby College have taken inspiration for the project, part funded by a £10,000 HLF grant, from letters, poems, books and photographs from the period including a visit to Derby Museum and Art Gallery.

Viva approached Osnabrück's envoy to Derby, Kai Kristin Nobbe, to link the schools involved with pupils in the German twin town and the first exchange of letters has taken place.

Vanessa Harbar, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East Midlands, welcomed the project: "We are delighted to play our part in supporting this project, and look forward to what should be a fantastic commemorative project. It will help all the pupils involved, to learn about the impact of the war.

"HLF has already invested more than £46million in commemorative projects that include local community projects like this one which serve to pay tribute to lives lost and the people who were affected during the conflict."

Kai Kristin explained: "I was delighted when Viva asked me to set up the letter exchange as part of the music project. I have linked Becket and Arboretum with my old school in Osnabrück who have thoroughly enjoyed writing and receiving letters.

"In an email age where communications are instant, it has been interesting for the young people to think about what goes into delivering a letter to a different country and just how difficult this would have been during war time.

"The centenary is also being marked in Germany in schools and through arts projects so I hope that the letter exchange continues in the coming years so that young people in both cities can share what they have learnt and perhaps start to discuss some of the issues and emotions that have been raised."

Sinfonia Viva Education Project Manager Andrew Nesbitt added: "An integral part of '*Dark Clouds are Smouldering into Red*' has been providing the opportunity for the young people involved to learn about the heritage of the First World War and particularly look at letters between soldiers and their families.

"These letters have helped to inspire the young people to write the words and music that they will perform at the concert on March 4 and to convey the emotions of personal stories through the dance choreography.
The letter exchange with Osnabrück has been a great way of bringing the subject to life and encouraging the young people to think about how families at this time must have held such great store in letters from their loved ones at the

front and at home.

"The whole project has therefore helped young people take an active and creative part in the Centenary commemorations and learn more about the legacy within our own heritage of this important time in history."

The Derby project is part of a regional tour involving young people in Lincoln, Scunthorpe, East Lindsey and Mansfield with a performance at Nottingham Lakeside in Autumn 2014 of the full composition by James Redwood and specially choreographed contemporary dance.

Notes to editors

The project has been backed by a wide range of sponsors and supporters, including HLF, Rolls Royce, Derbyshire Community Foundation – Tom Carey Fund and Orchestras Live, and the extended tour has been made possible by a £89,118 Strategic Touring grant from Arts Council England.

Further information

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