Youth music project blossoms in historic gardens

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The recently restored gardens at Valentines Mansion will be studied by 120 inner city teenagers thanks to a grant of £30,100 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

The Academy of St Martin in the Fields, an internationally renowned orchestra which has its base in Islington, will be working with heritage gardening experts from Vision Redbridge Culture and Leisure to help local young people trace the history of the mansion and its gardens dating from the 18th century. They will be supported by staff from the Mansion and Gardens, Redbridge Museum and Redbridge Nature Conservation Ranger Team to research how garden design was influenced by such things as contemporary historical events, artistic tastes, foreign travel and the social structure of the times.

Anna Rowe, Chief Executive of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, said: “We are strongly committed to education work, and we are delighted to be working with schools in Islington and Redbridge on this important heritage and music project. We are extremely grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding this initiative and look forward to welcoming the participants to our workshops.”

The young people will also study Mozart’s opera La Finta Giardiniera –The Pretend Gardener – and, through a series of school workshops, they will build a range of musical instruments and then compose a new musical work inspired by the gardens and the opera.

This work will be performed in front of family and friends from Islington and secondary school students from Redbridge at Kings Place concert hall in central London. They will also work with Redbridge Museum to create an exhibition about the project to be displayed at Valentines Mansion and will be using the project findings to produce a teacher’s resource pack for the benefit of Redbridge and Islington schools in the future.

For the Heritage Lottery Fund, Head of HLF London Sue Bowers, said: “This project will offer a range of new skills to the young people taking part as well giving them the chance to express their discoveries through performance. They will also learn more about local history and the biodiversity of the park and gardens.”

Notes to editors

The Academy of St Martin in the Fields is one of the world’s leading chamber orchestras. Established in 1958 by Sir Neville Marriner, the Academy is renowned world-wide for its international concert performances and award-winning recordings. The Academy’s Music Director is violinist Joshua Bell.

Valentines Park, Redbridge, has been restored with the aid of a £3,206,000 Parks for People grant from HLF. This aided the restoration of the ‘historic core’ located next to Valentines Mansion, a 300-year-old Grade II* listed building. The historic gardens comprise high quality Rococo landscapes incorporating a number of Grade II listed features including shellwork grottoes, a brick and flint alcove seat, a dovecote, ha-ha, formal watercourses, walled gardens and a wilderness. The restoration project also involved improved links with the local community and enhanced opportunities for learning.

Redbridge Museum is the community history museum for the London Borough of Redbridge, based in Ilford Central Library. Redbridge Nature Conservation Ranger Team aim to protect, enhance and raise awareness about the natural environment in the borough.

Further information

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