



Media Release

For immediate release: 14:00 hours GMT, Thursday 3 March 2011

BRITTEN-PEARS FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES GRANTS OF \$1,250,000 TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL EVENTS TO CELEBRATE BENJAMIN BRITTEN'S CENTENARY IN 2013.

Today the Britten-Pears Foundation announced awards of grants totalling **\$1,250,000** (£775,000 or €915,000) towards opera productions, new commissions and other events to take place in celebration of the centenary of Benjamin Britten's birth in 2013.

Britten is now **the third most performed opera composer of the 20th century** (behind Puccini and Richard Strauss) and productions of his works are mounted all over the world. The Britten-Pears Foundation has made available substantial funding to support a limited number of new productions of operas in and around the centenary year. The aim has been to encourage productions of the less well-known operas or in places where Britten's work was not so familiar. The trustees are pleased to announce that the following **Britten 100 Awards** have been made:

- **Billy Budd** – Teatro Municipal de Santiago and Teatro Argentino de la Plata, Buenos Aires
- **Billy Budd** – NBR New Zealand Opera
- **Church Parables** – Mahogany Opera: Hermitage Theatre, St Petersburg, Tokyo, City of London Festival, Orford
- **Curlew River** - Festival Productions: Beer Sheva, Haifa, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv
- **Gloriana** – Houston Grand Opera and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden
- **Gloriana** – New York City Opera, Los Angeles Opera and Norwegian National Opera
- **A Midsummer Night's Dream** –Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo, Brazil and Teatro Nacional de São Carlos, Lisbon
- **Paul Bunyan** – Chicago Opera Theater
- **Peter Grimes** – Shanghai Opera House and Beijing Music Festival

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The Britten-Pears Foundation is also pleased to announce the following **Special Awards**:

- **ENO**, for its series of Britten operas to be given between 2011 and 2014;
- **Birmingham Royal Ballet**, for performances of the full-length ballet **The Prince of the Pagodas** choreographed by David Bintley;
- **Aldeburgh Music**, to support the major Britten element in the 2013 Aldeburgh Festival, including performances of a special production of **Peter Grimes**.

The Britten-Pears Foundation is also particularly pleased to announce, jointly with the **Royal Philharmonic Society**, a series of **new commissions** to be made celebrating the bi-centenary of the RPS as well as the centenary of Britten's birth. Both organisations have been major contributors to the promotion of new music in the UK.

Led by Colin Matthews, a trustee of both the BPF and RPS, six major international composers have been chosen to write for different ensembles which reflect the range of Britten's compositional output, including symphony orchestra, children's choir and tenor with piano. The premieres will take place during 2013. Full details will be announced this autumn.

Commenting on these awards, the General Director of the Britten-Pears Foundation, **Richard Jarman**, said: "Britten is now recognised as one of the major composers of the 20th century and his operas are now performed all over the world. These awards will help introduce some of his less familiar operas to audiences and bring his work to places where it is not yet known.

"The Foundation was also keen to celebrate Britten's centenary by creating a new legacy and by supporting living composers – a cause always very dear to Britten's heart. So we are delighted to team up with the Royal Philharmonic Society to commission six leading composers of today in areas of the repertoire with which Britten was particularly associated.

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“We have also made three important Special Awards: to ENO, whose commitment to Britten’s work continues to be of huge value both in London and further afield through the co-productions they achieve; to Birmingham Royal Ballet, for David Bintley’s production of the ballet *The Prince of the Pagodas*, which still deserves better recognition; and to Aldeburgh Music, which will make a special celebration of Britten’s work where it was created, including an exciting new production of *Peter Grimes*.”

Commenting on the Britten 100 Award to the production of *Gloriana* at Houston Grand Opera, the General Director **Anthony Freud** said: “HGO eagerly anticipates presenting *Gloriana* to Houston audiences for the very first time. This new production will mark the sixth consecutive season in which the company has staged one of Britten’s works. HGO is deeply grateful to the Britten-Pears Foundation for supporting the entire series, and especially for its wonderful commitment to *Gloriana* through a Britten 100 Award.”

Commenting on the Britten 100 Award to the production of *Billy Budd* in Santiago de Chile, General Director **Andrés Rodríguez** said: “The reason why I want to present Britten’s *Billy Budd* is because we have as a permanent artistic policy in the theatre, to present new pieces for Chilean audiences. Britten’s masterpieces *Peter Grimes* and *The Turn of the Screw* were performed here in 2004 and 2006 and both operas were extremely well received by audiences and critics. I expect that the Chilean premiere of *Billy Budd* will have the same dramatic impact that 20th Century operas like *Jenufa*, *Wozzeck*, *Dialogues des Carmelites*, *Bluebeard’s Castle* and *Elektra* have had here in recent years.”

Commenting on the Britten 100 Award to the production of *Peter Grimes* at the Shanghai Opera House, President and Artistic Director **Guoyong Zhang** said: “We are thrilled to be given the Britten 100 Award, which will be crucial to our realisation of the Chinese premiere of *Peter Grimes*. We strongly believe that it is time to introduce

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this important 20th-century classic, one of the milestones of the operatic repertoire, to the Chinese audience. We very much look forward to presenting this new production of *Peter Grimes* with a Chinese perspective, and hope that it will also bring new light on Britten's work.”

Commenting on the Special Award to ENO, Artistic Director **John Berry** said: “ENO's Britten productions are currently travelling around the world to opera houses and festivals in Berlin, Milan, Antwerp, Moscow, Oviedo and Beijing. This substantial award from the BPF is a major cash injection during challenging financial times and will help us enormously to plan our Britten projects well into the future. We are extremely grateful to the BPF for recognising our work.”

Commenting on the Special Award for *The Prince of the Pagodas* at Birmingham Royal Ballet, its Director **David Bintley** said: “It is with great excitement that Birmingham Royal Ballet has been given a Special Award. In order to keep the ballet art form alive and exciting for audiences and performers alike, it is an essential part of the company's work to create and perform new, full-length narrative ballets. In collaboration with the National Ballet of Japan, a co-production of *The Prince of the Pagodas* will receive its world premiere in Japan in the autumn. The award will help stage the Birmingham Royal Ballet's performances of this rarely seen ballet, as it comes to life on the Birmingham Hippodrome stage in the not too distant future.”

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Notes to Editors

1. Background information on the **Britten-Pears Foundation**:

The BPF is one of the most important musical charities in the UK and its work extends throughout the world. Its principal functions are:

- Running a major **grant-giving programme**, supporting Aldeburgh Music; the composition of new music; the performance of Britten's music; and community projects in and around Aldeburgh;
- Acting as an important **centre for research**, based on the most comprehensive single-composer archive in the world;
- Curating Britten's home in Aldeburgh, The Red House, now seen as a **heritage site** of great significance;
- Helping to **promote Britten's music** worldwide through a programme of publications, education and financial support.

Working with his publishers, BPF has always been active in the international promotion of Britten's music, including the financial support of key performances and the publication of catalogues, books and recordings. Two key projects that BPF will conclude by the time of the Centenary are the publication of Britten's Letters in six volumes and the first online Thematic Catalogue of a composer's work in the world.

Using the unique archive, which contains 98% of Britten's manuscripts as well as 80,000 letters, artworks and artefacts relating to his life and music, BPF is increasingly involved in educational work of all kinds. What is special about this archive is that it is housed in the place where Britten worked and lived, and this brings a unique spirit of place. BPF has worked hard in recent years to make The Red House and its contents accessible and it is now seen as a heritage site of considerable power and significance.

One of Britten's main concerns was to help encourage the work of living composers. He gave many opportunities through the work of the Aldeburgh Festival and he founded Faber Music, still today one of the most important publishers of contemporary music. Every year BPF gives grants totalling some £50k towards the commissioning of new music.

2. Background information on **Britten opera performances**:

Unlike many composers after their death, Britten's reputation has not suffered a decline and now more than ever he is recognised as one of the major musical figures of the 20th century. His music is played in concert halls, recital rooms, recording studios and on radio stations throughout the world. Central to this reputation is the corpus of operas he wrote, works of huge dramatic power and musical beauty, which



are now produced in all the world's opera houses. Recent research has shown that Britten is now the third most performed operatic composer of the 20th century. Using the database *Operabase*, which tracks opera performances in all the major operatic centres, the relative results for performances announced or performed between January 2009 and August 2011 were as follows:

Composer	No. perfs.	No. productions	No. cities
Puccini	4840	917	335
Richard Strauss	1418	295	142
Britten	732	144	98
Janacek	496	108	64
Berg	260	56	41
Poulenc	224	64	52
Shostakovich	169	37	29
Debussy	122	27	22
Ravel	110	30	27
Henze	107	25	19
Bartok	101	27	22

Full information about Benjamin Britten's life and music and about the work of the Britten-Pears Foundation can be found at www.brittenpears.org.

Britten's music is published by:

Boosey & Hawkes (www.boosey.com)

Faber Music (www.fabermusic.com)

Chester Music (www.chesternovello.com)