



***** STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 06.00, 1 SEPTEMBER *****

The Royal Mint's Benjamin Britten 50p strikes a musical note

The Royal Mint today revealed the design for the 50p coin commissioned to mark the centenary of the birth of Benjamin Britten, which falls on 22 November 2013.

The first time that a composer has been featured on a British coin, the Benjamin Britten 50p is scheduled for release into general circulation later this year, and is available from 27 September in commemorative gold proof, silver proof and brilliant uncirculated versions in readiness for Britten's centenary celebrations on 22 November 2013.

Designed by artist Tom Phillips CBE, RA, the coin features Tennyson's words "Blow Bugle Blow" and "Set the Wild Echoes Flying", set to music by Britten in *Serenade* for tenor, horn and strings. The name of the composer is framed in a double stave, referencing the piano on which Britten was a virtuoso.

Although pre-eminent as an artist, Tom Phillips is widely known in musical circles for his work in opera (composer, librettist and set designer) and once sang in Britten's *Spring Symphony* as part of the Philharmonia Chorus, with Britten himself conducting.

Tom Phillips said:

"What I wanted the coin to speak of was music. Thus the stave soon entered the design... and his name married well with the stave. The natural accompaniment with Britten's passion for poetry as our preeminent composer of opera and song, was some kind of key quotation. The words which eventually suggested themselves, come from the Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings. What better clarion call for a musical anniversary could there be than "Blow, bugle, blow: set the wild echoes flying?"

Kevin Clancy, Director Royal Mint Museum, said:

"Britten is one of the great British cultural figures of the 20th century so it is wholly appropriate that Tom Phillips, himself a composer, should have designed the coin to commemorate Britten's birth."

Richard Jarman, Director Britten-Pears Foundation, said:

"Benjamin Britten wanted his music to be 'useful' and to be played and heard by as many people as possible. He would therefore be thrilled that this new 50p coin will put him into everyone's hands and pockets. We are enormously proud that Britten is being honoured in this way by the Royal Mint and the nation."

It will not just be classical music lovers and Britten enthusiasts who will want to collect this historic coin, but it is a must-have for collectors. The commemorative coins come beautifully displayed with a presentation folder that tells the story of Britten's lasting legacy to classical music and includes reproductions of Britten's original sheet music of his renowned film score, choral music and opera, complete with his hand-written notes.

For collectors, there is a further treat in store, since this most musical of 50ps is featured in The Royal Mint's brand new collector folder – keep an eye out for all 18 of the 50p designs in your change to complete your collection.

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Notes to editors:

- For more information on The Royal Mint's commemorative coins celebrating Benjamin Britten, please visit www.royalmint.com.
- A full biography of Tom Phillips is available at www.tomphillips.co.uk
- The 50p coin is a key part of Britten 100, the widest global celebration of a British composer. Full details at www.britten100.org

About The Royal Mint

The Royal Mint is one of the world's oldest and most venerable organisations, with an unbroken history of minting British coinage dating back over 1000 years. Though more than ten centuries have passed since then, The Royal Mint's reputation for both quality and integrity has always endured.

While The Royal Mint's finest traditions are always respected, it continually innovates in order to stay at the forefront of world minting, embracing the latest production techniques and technology in order to offer excellence to our clients across the globe. By underpinning our proud heritage with a highly progressive outlook, coins from The Royal Mint remain a byword for trust and reliability the world over.

There were estimated to be 28.9 billion UK coins in circulation at 31 March 2013, with a total face value of £3.9 billion, all manufactured by The Royal Mint. In total, 1.4 billion UK coins were issued during 2012-13.

As well as over 1,000 years of producing British coinage, The Royal Mint has long been trusted with the currencies of other countries. It currently serves more than 100 issuing authorities around the world and meet approximately 15% of global demand, making us the world's leading export mint.