

Show celebrates the schooldays of composer

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Words from the private letters and diaries of one of Britain's most celebrated composers will be brought to life at the school where he was educated.

Into your Satisfaction, based on the two years Benjamin Britten spent at Gresham's School, Holt, will be shown for one night only at the site's Auden Theatre next week.

Previously unheard music composed by Britten while at the school will feature in the show which will be performed in the centenary year of his birth.

Former head of English at Gresham's John Smart, from Thornage, wrote Into your

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John Smart

Satisfaction with former Gresham's headmaster Hugh Wright, musical director of Gresham's Prep School Nathan Waring, and former pupil Sarah Read.

Mr Smart, 67, who taught at the school from 1985 to 2006, said: "Britten was the greatest British musician in the last century.

"He encompassed all styles in his music including traditional, modern, classical and innovative.

"Any school would be very proud and feel lucky to have Britten as a former pupil."

Britten, who played the piano and viola, boarded at the school between



the winter term in 1928 and 1930 and left aged 16 with a school certificate but without A-levels. He continued his studies at the Royal College of Music in London and one of his best-known compositions was War Requiem in 1962.

Britten, who was born in Lowestoft, developed his pacifist beliefs at Gresham's and first heard church music in the school chapel.

Into your Satisfaction follows the themes of loneliness, Britten's love of sport and music and hatred of his music teacher Mr Greatorex.

Mr Smart said: "Writing the show changed our views of Britten. Mr Greatorex was always seen as a villain but we didn't think he was. It was always said how unhappy Britten was but we think that was a half truth.

"More importantly it showed how much his views and his music were influenced by his two years at Gresham's.

"It was fascinating putting it together and I hope it gives a picture of the school and a picture of the individual.

"I hope it will give a sense of what



■ Benjamin Britten during his schooldays and above left, a photo of the composer by Hans Wild. Picture: SUBMITTED/HANS WILD/BRITTEN-PEARS FOUNDATION

a remarkable personality he had – good or bad."

The show is called Into your Satisfaction because those words were used in a letter to Britten from another Greshamian pupil, Wystan Auden, who was six years older than the composer. Current Gresham's

pupils Emma Wright, Callum Chapman, and Jacob Jaggard, as well as David Makinson, owner of Holt Bookshop, and Norfolk film maker Tony Britten will be in acting roles.

■ The show will be performed on Tuesday, November 19 at 7.30pm and tickets cost £7. To book call 01263 713444 or visit www.greshams.com

Literary award



A biography written about a famous Gresham Old Boy has been shortlisted for a literary award.

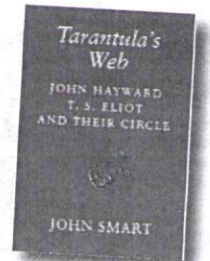
Tarantula's Web, written by former Gresham's head of English John Smart (pictured above), could win the H W Fisher Best First Biography Prize in London on November 20. Mr Smart is up against professional authors and if he wins the prize he will receive £5,000.

The book was published in January this year and is about John Hayward, who edited the Penguin Book of English Verse, a best-seller for some 50 years.

Hayward had a close friendship with leading 20th-century poet and playwright TS Eliot, Virginia Woolf and Graham Greene.

Mr Smart, who spent 11 years writing the book, said he was "absolutely delighted" to be shortlisted.

Tarantula's Web is published in hardback by Michael Russell at £20.



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