

Students set for mystery opera with Britten twist

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Scores of students will take to the stage today to sing out in celebration of one of the region's most famous musical sons.

Pupils of all ages from Gresham's school will perform the children's opera *Noye's Fludde*, an early 15th century mystery set to music written by celebrated composer Benjamin Britten.

The production marks the conclusion of Gresham's Britten Arts Festival, which alongside other regional events, has been celebrating the 100th anniversary of the maestro's birth.

Britten, born in Lowestoft on November 22, 1913, was a pupil at the Holt-based school from 1928 - 30 and lived most of his life in Aldeburgh.

Over the last 12 months a variety of events celebrating his work have been held across Norfolk and Suffolk.

Under the banner Familiar Fields, music groups from across the region

have come together to mark the importance of Britten and today's performance at Gresham's is one of the centenary programme's biggest productions.

Combining pupils from the pre-prep, prep and senior schools, *Noye's Fludde* (Noah's Flood) brings together students and professionals.

Former pupil Dicken Gough, a singer with Opera North, is taking the role of Noye, while award winning soprano and singing teacher Posy Walton is playing his wife Mrs Noye and head of classics Gareth Burnell has been cast as God.

Paul Hands, director, said pupils - most of whom are playing animals - had been enjoying rehearsals and getting involved in such a colourful production.

"Rather nicely we have got children aged seven - 18, an old Greshamian, a singing teacher and a classics teacher all taking part," he added. "It's a huge community event for us."

Other events being held in the last weeks of the centenary programme include; Norwich Philharmonic's performance of Britten's choral masterpiece *War Requiem* on Saturday, a talk from his nephew John Britten on November 15, an entertainment based on his schoolboy diaries and letters on November 19 and the Aldeburgh music centenary weekend from November 22 - 24.

■ Noye's Flood will be performed today at 2.30pm and 6.30pm. Tickets at £5 are available from the box office on 01263 713444 or email boxoffice@greshams.com. For more details about upcoming events visit www.familiarfields.org



■ Pupils from Gresham's School rehearse the opera *Noye's Fludde*.

Pictures: ANTONY KELLY

