

Diaries inspire show about composer's life

By **SOPHIE WYLLIE**
sophie.wyllie@archant.co.uk

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 Lowestoft-born 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 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."

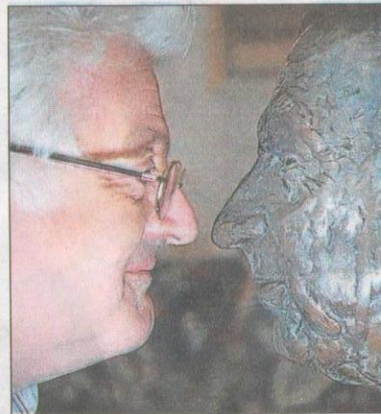
Britten, who played the piano and viola, boarded at the school between the winter term in 1928 and 1930 and left aged 16 with a school certificate but without A-levels.

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 developed his pacifist beliefs at Gresham's and first heard serious 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.



CREATOR: John Smart next to the bust of Benjamin Britten.

"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 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 play the 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.

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

Tarantula's Web could win the H W Fisher Best First Biography Prize in London on November 20.

The book 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.

In Brief

Twinning stall at switch-on

The Sheringham-Otterndorf Twinning Association will have a stall selling Gluhwein at the Sheringham Christmas lights switch-on this year.

The event will held on December 6 and the lights will be switched on at 7pm.

An annual meeting for the twinning group was held on November 6 at Sheringham Community Centre.

Members will be visiting Otterndorf in May next year.

For more information call 01263 823818.

Tick-off for Tesco

Tesco national bosses are set to get a stern letter from Stalham Town Council reminding them of their duty to maintain the lighting and pathway between Stalham High Street and Tesco's store in the town.

The council is also writing to the district council's planning chief calling for enforcement action against Tesco if it fails to take action. Councillors believe the store is breaking conditions of its planning permission. Members heard the passage was dirty and only one light worked.