

FRIDAY AFTERNOONS



PRESS RELEASE

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Join thousands of young people to sing Jonathan Dove's new song cycle for Friday Afternoons' 'Big Sing' on Friday 18 November

Friday Afternoons is a UK-wide and international singing project led by the Suffolk-based arts organisation Aldeburgh Music which has got more than 80,000 young people singing since its launch in 2013. On **Friday 18 November 2016** thousands of young people across the country will sing twelve new songs especially written for the project by British composer **Jonathan Dove** with lyrics by writing partner **Alasdair Middleton**.

Friday Afternoons was originally conceived as the culmination of the worldwide 2013 centenary celebrations and takes its name from the set of simple songs the composer Benjamin Britten wrote for his brother's school to sing every Friday. Each year Friday Afternoons commissions a new set of songs, over time creating a significant resource of songs especially written for young people's voices. Now in its fourth year, the annual project champions the joy of collective singing and encourages as many young people as possible to join in. It culminates in the 'Big Sing' day when performances take place across the UK as close to Britten's birthday as possible: 22 November.

All the resources to learn the songs, including scores, recordings, teaching resources and interactive material from Charanga, are available to download free of charge from the Friday Afternoons website www.fridayafternoonsmusic.co.uk

Participants already involved in this year's Friday Afternoons come from all parts of the country including music hubs in Nottingham, Lancashire, Lincolnshire; schools in Kent and Leeds; and choirs in Ipswich, Isle of Skye, London and Birmingham. Aldeburgh Music will also host 800 Suffolk school children in the Snape Maltings Concert Hall where the new songs by Dove and Middleton will be performed.

Viewers will be able to watch a selection of the performances taking place across the UK on Friday 18 November live-streamed on the Friday Afternoons website.

www.fridayafternoonsmusic.co.uk

'Not since Benjamin Britten has a British composer succeeded in writing operas which communicate with such clarity and coherence to their audience as those by Jonathan Dove'
Gramophone

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Notes to Editors

Aldeburgh Music is an international performance centre set in stunning landscape on the Suffolk coast, with artist development and education as its creative engine. Its year-round programme has grown out of the Aldeburgh Festival and is the realisation of composer Benjamin Britten's vision of a special place where established stars, young artists, amateurs and audience members come to broaden their horizons in an exhilarating creative and natural environment. Aldeburgh Music's creative campus at Snape Maltings hosts more than 150 events per year including the Aldeburgh Festival in June, while its artist development work gives musicians of all ages, backgrounds and career stages the time, space and support to develop and create new work. Meanwhile Aldeburgh Education runs inspirational learning and community programmes including the international mass-participation singing project Friday Afternoons and three long-term wellbeing projects with school pupils, people living with dementia, and prisoners. www.aldeburgh.co.uk

Jonathan Dove's early musical experience came from playing the piano, organ and viola. Later he studied composition with Robin Holloway at Cambridge and, after graduation, worked as a freelance accompanist, répétiteur, animateur and arranger. His early professional experience gave him a deep understanding of singers and the complex mechanics of the opera house. Opera and the voice have been the central priorities in Dove's output throughout his subsequent career.

Starting with his breakthrough opera *Flight*, commissioned by Glyndebourne in 1998, Dove has gone on to write over twenty operatic works. In 2010 *A Song of Joys* for chorus and orchestra opened the festivities at the Last Night of the Proms. Throughout his career Dove has made a serious commitment to community development through innovative musical projects. His 2012 opera *Life is a Dream*, was performed by professionals and community choruses in a disused Birmingham warehouse, and a church opera involving community singers *The Walk from the Garden* was premiered at Salisbury Cathedral.

2015 brought the World Premieres of *The Day After*, commissioned and produced by Holland Opera with a libretto by April de Angelis, a post-Apocalyptic setting of the myth of Phaeton written specifically to be performed outside; and *The Monster in the Maze*, a new opera for children, young people and adults, with a libretto by Alasdair Middleton, commissioned by the Berliner Philharmoniker, London Symphony Orchestra, and Festival d'Art Lyrique d'Aix-en-Provence, and led by Sir Simon Rattle and Simon Halsey.

Alasdair Middleton was born in Yorkshire and trained at the Drama Centre, London. His work as a librettist includes: with Jonathan Dove – *The Monster in the Maze* (Berliner Philharmoniker, London Symphony Orchestra, Aix-en-Provence Festival), *Diana and Actaeon* (Royal Ballet), *The Walk From The Garden* (Aegeas Salisbury International Arts Festival), *Life Is A Dream* (Birmingham Opera), *Mansfield Park* (Heritage Opera), *Swanhunter* (Opera North), *The Enchanted Pig* (The Young Vic, ROH2), *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (Opera North), and the cantata *On Spital Fields* (Spitalfields Festival, winner of a Royal Philharmonic Society Award); With Paul Englishby – *Pleasure's Progress* (ROH2), *Who Is This That Comes* (Opera North) and *The Crane Maiden* (KAAT Yokohama). Other libretti include *The World Was All Before Them*, *On London Fields*, winner of an Royal Philharmonic Society Award, *A Bird In Your Ear* (New York City Opera), *The North Wind Was A Woman* (A Song Cycle for Dawn Upshaw), *Everything Money Can Buy* (Selfridges) *The Feathered Friend*. He has written four plays; *Aeschylean Nasty*, *Shame On You Charlotte*, *Casta Diva* and *Einmal*.