

## A Celebration of Aldeburgh Festivals 12 – 28 June

### Highlights include:

- ‘Opening Night’ broadcast of *Britten on Camera* on BBC Four followed by Struan Leslie’s *Illuminations* – a staging including circus performers of Britten’s *Les Illuminations* - seen for the first time on Britten Pears Arts’ YouTube Channel
- *Peter Grimes on Aldeburgh Beach* will be available on BBC iPlayer later this month
- Create your own Aldeburgh Musicircus experience online
- BBC Radio 3 to broadcast six archive performances from Aldeburgh Festival between 19 – 26 June
- Aldeburgh Festival invites audiences to share their memories from its 72 festivals

12 – 28 June 2020 would have been the 73<sup>rd</sup> Aldeburgh Festival and this is the first time in its history that it will not go ahead. During the period that the Festival would have taken place, Britten Pears Arts presents a celebration of the Festival’s unique programming over more than 70 years, in collaboration with **BBC Radio 3** and **BBC Four**, part of **BBC Arts’ Culture in Quarantine**, keeping the arts and culture in the homes of the public despite the impact of lockdown which has seen festivals and performance venues unable to open.

### **BBC Four: Britten on Camera**

Commissioned for Britten’s centenary in 2013, *Britten on Camera*, narrated by **James Naughtie**, presents some of the highlights of Britten’s broadcast legacy. He was one of the great classical composers of the broadcasting age and his music was regularly performed on radio and television throughout his working life. This documentary explores the dynamic relationship he developed with the BBC to bring classical music to wider audiences. Contributors include **David Attenborough**, **Michael Crawford**, **Humphrey Burton** and **Nicholas Kenyon** (Fri 12 June, 7pm, BBC Four).

### **Film premiere: Illuminations**

The 2016 Aldeburgh Festival opened to great critical acclaim with *Illuminations*, a new work for soprano, string orchestra and an ensemble of circus performers. Inspired by the sensuality and symbolism of the poems by Rimbaud set in Britten’s song cycle *Les Illuminations*, director **Struan Leslie** created a newly-commissioned staging fusing music and contemporary circus performance. Soprano **Sarah Tynan** joined an ensemble of nine international circus performers, **Aurora Orchestra** and conductor **Nicholas Collon** in a devised performance. On **Friday 12 June**, Aldeburgh Festival will broadcast the premiere performance of *Les Illuminations* on Britten Pears Arts’ [YouTube channel](#) at 9pm and it will be available on demand for the following 30 days.

### **BBC iPlayer: Peter Grimes on Aldeburgh Beach**

In 2013 as part of Britten’s centenary celebrations, Aldeburgh Festival presented an unforgettable open-air staging of Britten’s *Peter Grimes* on the very beach that inspired the opera, set against the dramatic backdrop of the North Sea. The cast was led by **Alan Oke** in the title role and **Giselle Allen** as Ellen Orford. **Steuart Bedford** conducted the **Britten-Pears Orchestra** and the **Choruses of Opera North** and **Guildhall School of Music & Drama**. It became one of the most talked about events of the year. *Peter Grimes on Aldeburgh Beach* will be available later this month.

### **An Aldeburgh Musicircus**

A memorable event took place in 2014 when Aldeburgh Festival presented a version of John Cage's Musicircus which took over the town of Aldeburgh for two hours. Cage's concept was to invite anyone to perform anything they want to at the same time. Cage famously said, 'You won't hear anything: you'll hear everything'. The Aldeburgh Festival performance featured around 1,000 performers, from artists and ensembles featured in the Festival to local bands and community music groups – the largest ever gathering of musicians in Aldeburgh with performances all over the town. Audiences can now create and mix their own Musicircus with an interactive digital experience based on the 40 performances that were filmed. This web app will be available at <https://musicircus.brittenpearsarts.org> from 12 June.

### **BBC Radio 3**

BBC Radio 3 has been broadcasting from the Aldeburgh Festival for more than 50 years, and delves into the archive to broadcast six memorable concerts from the last decade.

**John Wilson** conducts the **BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra** in a concert from 2018 which explored Britten's wartime experience of America, the relationships that took him there and echoes of home. The programme features the first performance of **Colin Matthews'** orchestration of Britten's *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo* with tenor **Robert Murray**, Britten's *Sinfonia da Requiem*, Copland's *Quiet City* and Bernstein's *Symphony No. 2 The Age of Anxiety* with pianist **Cédric Tiberghien** (19 June, 7.30pm, BBC Radio 3 in Concert).

**Netia Jones'** new production of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* opened the 2017 Festival bringing to life the captivating tale of lovers, rustics and fairies. Conducted by **Ryan Wigglesworth**, it features a cast of internationally renowned singers including **Iestyn Davies** (Oberon), **Sophie Bevan** (Tytania), **Matthew Rose** (Bottom), **Clive Bayley** (Theseus) and **Andrew Shore** (Quince) (20 June, 6.30pm, Opera on 3).

**Sir Simon Rattle** conducts the **City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra** (CBSO) in a performance of Messiaen's *Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum* and Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* from the 2011 Festival. He is joined by soloists **Magdalena Kozena** and **Michael Schade** (23 June, BBC Radio 3 in Concert).

In 2018 **Cédric Tiberghien** and the period strings of the **Chiaroscuro Quartet** explored chamber music by German romantic greats with a programme including Schumann's *Fantasy Op. 17* and his *Piano Quintet* alongside Mendelssohn's *String Quartet Op. 12*. (24 June, 7.30pm, Radio 3 in Concert).

In 2017 **Lionel Meunier** and his award-winning Belgian early music vocal group **Vox Luminis** made their Aldeburgh Festival debut. This programme from Blythburgh Church marked the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Martin Luther's Reformation and includes two Bach Cantatas set alongside Schütz's *Musikalische Exequien*, (25 June, 7.30pm, BBC Radio 3 in Concert).

**Oliver Knussen** had a long-standing relationship with both the Aldeburgh Festival and the **BBC Symphony Orchestra**. This performance was Knussen's final concert. One of Knussen's typical programmes, it features the world premiere of **Philip Cashian's** *The Book of Ingenious Devices*, a piano concerto in a single movement performed by **Huw Watkins**, **Morton Feldman's** *Structures* and music by **Aaron Copland** - *Music for a Great City*, and the Appalachian Spring Suite (26 June, 7.30pm, BBC Radio 3 in Concert).

### **Aldeburgh Festival Memories**

Britten Pears Arts is using the space created by the current lockdown to celebrate the remarkable history of a Festival which is renowned for its intimate feel and the special place it has in audience's hearts. The organisation is now collecting people's memories of as many of the 72 Festivals as possible, inviting anyone who has a story to tell about a Festival visit to post their memories, using this [online form](#). A timeline documenting the memories will be displayed at [brittenpearsarts.org](http://brittenpearsarts.org) throughout the Festival.

There will also be podcasts, articles and social media projects (including an “On This Day” feature) giving insights into the extraordinary breadth and quality of the Festival over the years.

Aldeburgh Festival is one of the world’s most significant classical music events, set in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on the Suffolk coast. The Festival was founded in 1948 by composer Benjamin Britten, tenor Peter Pears and the librettist/producer Eric Crozier.

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**Notes to Editors**

**About Britten Pears Arts**

Britten Pears Arts is a pioneering music, arts and heritage charity based on the Suffolk coast at two popular, historic visitor destinations: The Red House and Snape Maltings. Britten Pears Arts emerged from the creative partnership of Benjamin Britten, one of the greatest composers of the 20th century, and his professional and personal partner, singer Peter Pears. Britten and Pears shared a progressive vision for music and the arts to be useful, helping people enhance and bring joy into their lives. Britten and Pears’ vision inspires all our activity, from work with the local communities to our national leadership roles in the fields of talent development and music, health and wellbeing. Britten Pears Arts was created through the merger of the Britten–Pears Foundation and Snape Maltings in 2020.

[www.brittenpearsarts.org](http://www.brittenpearsarts.org)

[www.snapemaltings.co.uk](http://www.snapemaltings.co.uk)

[www.brittenpears.org](http://www.brittenpears.org)

**About BBC Radio 3**

We believe arts and music make the world a better place by bringing people together through shared experience and understanding, providing a place of inspiration, and a means to navigate a complex world. At BBC Radio 3 we want to enable as many people as possible to have life changing musical and arts experiences. We aim to provide listeners with time out from a busy world through full-length artistic performances and slow radio that takes the time it takes. We pride ourselves on being a commissioner and interpreter of complex culture; shining a new light on well-loved artistic works and investing in new artistic talent to bring cutting edge work to audiences everywhere. We are one of the most significant commissioners of contemporary classical music anywhere in the world and the biggest broadcaster of live classical concerts including the BBC Proms. From classical music to arts discussion, documentaries to essays, drama to sound art, video games and film music, to jazz, world, ambient, electronic and the avant-garde, there is a Radio 3 for everybody – we welcome you to join us on BBC Sounds, DAB, online, and on FM.

**About Culture in Quarantine**

BBC Arts’ Culture in Quarantine initiative is an essential arts and culture service across BBC platforms that will keep the arts alive in people’s homes, focused most intensely across BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio 4, BBC Two, BBC Four, BBC Sounds, BBC iPlayer and [www.bbc.co.uk/bbcarts](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcarts) . We are doing this in close consultation and collaboration with organisations like Arts Council England and other national funding and producing bodies.

This arts and culture service includes:

- Guides and access to shuttered exhibitions or permanent collections from museums and galleries
- Ways to experience books with privileged access to authors including a collaboration with the Big Book Weekend amongst other initiatives.

- Jewels from the archive as well as brand new content ensuring that brand new theatre and dance performances will join with modern classics to create a repertory theatre of broadcast.
- Participatory offers including masterclasses and ways to enable audiences to start or continuing being creative whilst at home through Get Creative
- Topical arts through Front Row, Culture in Lockdown with Mary Beard, Free Thinking and more
- A fund with Arts Council England to support around 25 artists to create new work
- A place for arts organisations to share innovations from quarantine and for audiences to discover new things through [www.bbc.co.uk/arts](http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts)