

Press release
Embargoed to 6pm on Mon 8 October 2018

OPERA NORTH

EMBARGOED TO MONDAY 8 OCTOBER, 6.00pm

MUSIC WORKS: MAJOR FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED FOR OPERA NORTH REDEVELOPMENT

A major fundraising campaign, **Music Works**, has been launched by **Opera North** to enable a significant capital redevelopment project during 2019-2020. The Company's transformed buildings will be a home for everyone; developing talent, supporting world-class artists and inspiring audiences, and will cement Opera North as a modern business and a creative powerhouse in the heart of Leeds.

Music Works will create a place for artists to make thrilling music, where people of all ages can learn and participate, and where audiences are welcome to connect with each other and Opera North.

Situated in the heart of Leeds on New Briggate, a major thoroughfare to the north of the city, the redeveloped buildings will comprise: a world-class facility to make opera; a new Education Studio; new rehearsal and performance spaces; double the number of performances in the Howard Assembly Room and a dedicated public entrance to the Howard Assembly Room; and a new restaurant and bar replacing a row of vacant shop units.

The target for the **Music Works** fundraising campaign is £18 million. This will deliver the project, which represents a cost of £15 million, and will also create a new fund to enable Opera North to deliver more music and education activity in the future.

Opera North has raised £12.7 million to date, achieving 70% of the overall target, including a significant philanthropic gift of £11.25 million from **Dr Keith Howard OBE**, President of Opera North and founder of Emerald Publishing. A long-standing supporter of the Company, Dr Howard has previously

supported the first transformation of the Howard Assembly Room, wider improvements to the Leeds Grand Theatre and the creation of the Emerald Grand Hall, in a renovation project which took place between 2005-2008. He was founding Chairman of the Opera North Future Fund and supports numerous other charities, organisations and causes. Dr Howard's generosity and passionate belief in the importance of opera and music has been central in allowing the Company to deliver this transformational project.

Leeds City Council has contributed £750,000, together with the lease of the vacant shops on New Briggate, and the balance of the funds raised to date has come from a number of private donors.

There remains a funding gap of £5.3 million to close, and the Company is now looking to national trusts and foundations, the business community and major donors to secure their support, before rolling out opportunities for audiences and individuals to play their part in the success of the redevelopment at many different levels.

Richard Mantle, General Director, Opera North said:

“We believe that music works. To inspire us, music works. To connect us, music works. To move us, music works. For our city, for everyone, music works.”

“Music Works is about creating a building to make and experience music, but it's also about creating thrilling, powerful performances and the opportunities for participation that will bring the new spaces to life for many years to come. The project will deliver a building, together with an associated programme of performance and educational activity, of significant value to our city and region.”

“We are extraordinarily grateful for the generosity and commitment of everyone who has supported Music Works to date, and in particular to the long-standing support of Dr Keith Howard OBE, whose transformative gift has enabled this project to come so far, bringing these ambitious plans within touching distance. We believe this represents one of the single largest philanthropic gifts ever made by one individual to an arts organisation in the UK and certainly outside of London, and we are indebted to Dr Howard for this extraordinary vote of confidence in the future growth of the Company. We still have a significant target of £5.3 million to raise, but we are confident we can be successful with the backing of our many supporters and stakeholders, ensuring we turn this plan into reality and make music work for everyone in Leeds.”

Dr Keith Howard OBE, President of Opera North and founder of Emerald Publishing, said:

“My long-held passion for music has been nurtured by Opera North over many years and it is my belief that this project will enable the Company to pursue its ambition to bring music to everyone. These new world-class facilities will create the perfect environment for artists, participants and audiences to come together and experience the joy that music and music-making can bring.

“I sincerely hope that others will join me in supporting Music Works, which will create a place benefitting the people of Leeds and beyond well into the future.”

One of England’s largest arts companies, Opera North is a key driver of artistic innovation and skills in the region, permanently employing over 250 people including highly skilled costume-makers, stage managers, electricians, stage technicians, props-makers, sound and lighting technicians, educators, designers, and, of course, musicians, in addition to working with around 370 freelance performers, creatives and artists each year. Opera North’s award-winning opera productions are created and premiered in Leeds, and the Company performs at Leeds Grand Theatre each season before touring its opera productions to theatres across the country.

MUSIC WORKS

More live music, for everyone

- Double the number of performances in the Howard Assembly Room
- A dedicated entrance for the Howard Assembly Room
- An open, welcoming building that is fully accessible at all levels
- New public spaces and a beautiful atrium

The **Howard Assembly Room** will be given a dedicated public entrance for the first time since it was restored in 2009. A ‘hidden gem’ managed and programmed by Opera North but currently accessed via the adjacent Leeds Grand Theatre, the redevelopment of the venue’s entrance will offer a greatly enhanced environment for artists and audiences alike, with new communal spaces in a beautiful glass atrium, direct stairs and lift access and improved front of house facilities.

Music Works will enable us to host a full year-round programme of performances, workshops and small-scale productions in the Howard Assembly Room, doubling the number of performances given at the venue. We will bring more of the best global musicians and artists to Leeds each year, creating a diverse calendar of jazz, world music, folk, classical concerts, children’s opera, talks, film and installations.

Extraordinary experiences for audiences

- A new restaurant and bar, open to everyone all day
- A fully accessible estate
- A refurbished Opera North Box Office and reception for Leeds Grand Theatre
- Restoration of a Grade II listed building

Music Works will regenerate a row of vacant shops directly beneath the Howard Assembly Room to create a new restaurant and bar alongside a refurbished Box Office. A new dedicated “front door” will be established for Opera North and the Howard Assembly Room; our building will be open to everyone from morning until late at night for coffee, lunch, dinner and drinks. Ours will be a welcoming place for meeting, socialising and relaxing and will provide a greatly enhanced audience journey, from booking a ticket to curtain down. The creation of a new city centre restaurant and bar serving concert and theatre goers, as well as the wider public will add resilience to the Company’s future income streams.

We will make significant improvements to the Grade II listed frontage of the building. This regeneration of a historic building on New Briggate will help improve an important part of Leeds city centre, including the approach to Leeds Grand Theatre and the wider civic space.

Cutting edge facilities for making opera

- A new purpose-built Music Rehearsal Studio
- Three new music practice rooms
- Refurbished Costume Workshop and Dye Room
- A new artist and Company green room

Music Works will transform Opera North’s estate on Harrison Street, between New Briggate and Vicar Lane, to create an outstanding artistic centre for the Company’s creative work.

A new Music Rehearsal Studio will be built on top of the existing opera rehearsal studios, providing a state-of-the-art, dedicated home for the Orchestra and Chorus of Opera North, alongside three private coaching rooms for singers and musicians. The production offices will be revitalised, including refurbishing the Costume Workshop with new specialist facilities for making costumes and wigs for our mainstage productions.

A home for Opera North Education

- A new, flexible Education Studio
- A new music coaching room for students
- Break out spaces and 'secret garden' for school groups
- A shared entrance for students, artists and staff, placing young people at the heart of the Company

Music Works will create a specially designed Education Studio, to house our award-winning education work in Leeds. The ground floor of our main building will be transformed into a series of interlinking teaching rooms and studio spaces. For the first time, youth ensembles, early years and family groups, schools' workshops, and singing groups for adults will have a permanent base within Opera North, with participants working within the same footprint as artists from across the globe.

Our growing lifelong education work is a vital and extensive component of Opera North's output. This new Studio will be a centre of excellence and a home at the heart of the Company, where audiences of all ages and backgrounds can learn about and participate in making music. We will help shape futures and inspire deep-rooted engagement with opera and musical theatre.

An environmentally sustainable cultural flagship for Leeds

- An environmentally sustainable and efficient estate
- Photovoltaic panels to generate energy
- A significant contribution to the New Briggate public realm
- A major capital investment in the run up to 2023 Leeds cultural celebrations
- Investment in digital infrastructure to increase efficiency and reduce environmental impact

We will invest in state-of-the-art and environmentally sustainable facilities to house our staff of over 250 people and more than 370 visiting artists who work with Opera North each year. **Music Works** will support artistic exploration and excellence, making a valuable contribution to the cultural and civic fabric of Leeds and beyond.

operanorth.co.uk/musicworks

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Notes to Editors:

Opera North is a national opera company based in Leeds, and is a leading UK arts organisation. Rooted in the North of England, international in outlook, we create extraordinary experiences, every day.

Our award-winning work tours to theatre stages and concert halls throughout the North and beyond, including to London and major international festivals, and we curate an eclectic artistic programme of gigs, concerts, spoken word and film in the **Howard Assembly Room**.

Opera North believes opera and music is for everyone, and champions diversity in artists, repertoire and audiences. Our aim is to make bold, innovative, ambitious work and share it in new ways; continually revitalising our approach to opera and musical theatre. We work in partnership with a wide range of artists and arts companies, and commission new work from new operas to film scores and sound installations.

Opera North Education connects with communities and inspires each generation, aiming to enhance the health and well-being of people in the communities where we work through arts participation and performance. Last year, more than 19,000 children, young people and adults participated in education programmes, from schools' matinee performances to creative workshops.

Creativity is important throughout the Company, from the versatility and artistry of our Chorus and Orchestra, to our highly skilled team of technical, production and management staff. Opera North is also a sector leader in developing partnerships between the arts and Higher Education.

The work of Opera North is made possible by direct support from Arts Council England and Leeds City Council, sponsorship from the private sector, the Friends of Opera North, the Opera North Future Fund and the box office income from its audiences. The Company is grateful to the many business sponsors, charitable trusts and individuals who together assist Opera North to continue to mount its award-winning programmes.

operanorth.co.uk

howardassemblyroom.co.uk