

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE: **Education, Culture and Sport**

DATE: **24th March 2011**

DIRECTOR: **Annette Bruton**

TITLE OF REPORT: **Mary Garden Opera fund**

REPORT NUMBER: **ECS/11/008**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report brings to the attention of the Committee a proposal from the Aberdeen International Youth Festival in relation to the Mary Garden Fund which is already agreed within the Common Good Fund budget. Up to five fully funded placements will be funded from the Mary Garden fund to local young singers, subject to application and audition.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee agrees to endorse the AIYF proposal to use the Mary Garden Fund to support up to five young promising singers from Aberdeen to attend an opera residency.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The allocation towards the Mary Garden Fund within the Common Good fund is £1,500. There are no other financial implications.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

The proposal will involve up to five placements being made available to young people from the City to participate in a residency, with expert tuition and opportunities to perform during the Youth Festival. The Mary Garden Fund supports the delivery of Single Outcome Agreement National Outcome13: 'We take pride in a strong and inclusive national identity'

The project proposed also directly relate to strands of the following Local and National Outcomes:

Outcome 3, 'People of all ages take an active part in their own learning to achieve their full potential' and 'Learning and training is appropriate and accessible to learner's needs.

Additionally, the initiative relates to both local outcomes for National Outcome 4, 'Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens', and Outcome 12, 'Aberdeen is widely recognised as a City with high quality natural assets, biodiversity, architecture and heritage which instill civic pride.'

The Aberdeen City Cultural strategy, 'Vibrant Aberdeen' has five objectives:

- Establish a cohesive cultural sector.
- Increase community engagement in cultural activity.
- Improve the city's cultural profile.
- Increase investment in culture.
- Effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of culture.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no additional Legal, Resource, Personnel, Property, Equipment, Environmental or health and safety implications arising from this report at this time.

6. REPORT

Within the Common Good fund, £1,500 is allocated to the 'Mary Garden Opera Fund'. In 2009, following Resources Management approval, the fund was utilised by the Aberdeen International Youth Festival for the first time in a number of years. Previously, and more traditionally, it was used as a cash award and for a silver medallion which was presented to outstanding opera singers at the Aberdeen International Youth Festival. In 2009 the initiative was led in collaboration with Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (RSAMD) Opera School and the Shell Opera and Song residency. The partnership is now in its fifth year.

6.1 Aims of the partnership

The partnership aims to:

- Provide the young students with a range of artistically challenging and creatively rewarding opportunities
- Explore ways of making opera more accessible and to produce high quality performance opportunities for a range of audiences
- To provide vocal and technical workshops for both student participants, the general public and local young singers

6.2 Feedback from 2010 initiative

In 2010 the partnership with Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama Opera included:

- 'A serenade to Music' concert in the Music Hall, featuring 16 singers and a string sextet. This performance was a prelude to the singers working with the BBC Scottish Symphony orchestra at 'the Proms' in London
- A lunchtime concert at the Music Hall in a more informal style
- A major evening Opera and Song event at the University of Aberdeen
- An open to the public master class session with opera singer Lisa Milne
- Local singers as placement students with the variety of work as of previous years, including a private session with Lisa Milne. Having greater planning time, they also received more 1 -2 -1 work with the resident professionals.
- Opportunities for the musicians to perform as part of the new 'AIYF Up close and Musical' sessions.

The placement student element has now become an important part of the project for a number of reasons that go beyond just enabling young singers to experience the opportunity of working in this intense way.

- It challenges the young singers from RSAMD
- It keeps the project fresh and outward looking and more than a change of scenery for the RSAMD performers and staff
- It allows more variety in the programming
- It offers more contact for AIYF to the local education and music sectors
- It builds another key relationship with the University of Aberdeen Music department through the Opera society

6.3 2011 proposal

The theme of the 2011 residency will be 'Audiences and creating the right programme'.

In 2011 AIYF intend to:

- Present one or two lunchtime concerts, with one aimed at families, in line with the greater emphasis AIYF has been putting on that audience demographic
- Present an evening concert of scenes and songs where the placement singers will be used as part of the chorus and stage management teams
- Programme an open master class with Lisa Milne, and a private masterclass for the placement students with Lisa Milne
- Opportunities for the musicians to perform as part of the 'AIYF up close and Musical' sessions'

Feedback from the RSAMD students has enabled and encouraged AIYF to increase the opportunity from four to five this year.

If approved, in 2011 the grant will support the work below:

- Up to 5 subsidised placements to local singers, subject to application and audition
- Expert tuition from senior RSAMD musicians and directors and with Lisa Milne, including bespoke sessions for this group
- Opportunities to be part of productions as part of the residency programme

- All meals and travel during the residencies and accommodation as required
- All other expenses including any other travel to and from sessions
- An opportunity to other festival shows, especially those related to music and choral singing
- An award of a certificate and memento to each, in recognition of their participation.

6.4 Promotion of the residencies

The Opera and Song residency will be promoted through a number of formal and informal sectors including:

- The University of Aberdeen Music department including the Opera Society
- North East Scotland Music School
- Aberdeen City Music School
- The Instrumental Music service manager, and through the school music service
- Private schools and singing teachers
- Creative cultures and Aberdeen City websites
- AIYF website
- General press release.

7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Mary Garden Opera Fund Resources Management Committee 5 May 2009
Mary Garden Opera Fund Finance and Resources Committee 6 May 2010