

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE: **Finance and Resources**
DATE: **6th May 2010**
DIRECTOR: **Annette Bruton**
TITLE OF REPORT: **Mary Garden Opera fund**
REPORT NUMBER: **ECS/10/043**

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 sits within the Common Good Fund budget. Three or four placements will be offered 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 four young promising singers from Aberdeen to attend an opera residency.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The allocation towards the Mary Garden Fund within the Common Good budget is £1,500.00. There are no other financial or state aid implications.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

The proposal will see up to four placements available to young people from the City participate in a residency, with expert tuition and opportunities to perform. 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 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 in its citizens.’.

The Aberdeen City Cultural strategy, ‘Vibrant Aberdeen’ is due to be launched on the 30th April 2010 and forms the framework for the outcome evaluation process, is based on a series of core objectives which support the principles of service and community enhancement:

The five objectives are to:

- 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 budget, there is a fund of £1,500 allocated to the ‘Mary Garden Opera Fund’. Last year, following Resources Management approval, the fund was utilised by 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 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 RSAMD Opera School and the Shell Opera and Song residency, as part of AIYF 2009. The partnership is now in its fourth 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 technical workshops for both student participants, the general public and local young singers

6.2 Feedback from 2009 initiative

In 2009 some new initiatives were introduced to increase opportunities including:

- Inclusion of four singers as placement students for the period of the project, attending rehearsals, workshops and taking roles in the main evening concerts: master class sessions with opera directors
- Two lunchtime concerts
- A major opera and song event attracting 250 people
- Public master class session

- Performance opportunities in the AIYF International Variety Gala and as part of the AIYF chamber music series

Being awarded the £1,500 grant to enable the participation of local singers as part of the project gave an added layer and interest to the project. Not only could the range of scenes be increased with the possibility of their inclusion, the RSAMD were challenged in their own practice by questions posed by the young people. Feedback from participants was extremely positive and the placement students all felt that not only their singing knowledge had been enhanced, but also their all round understanding of opera production.

6.3 2010 proposal

In 2010 the four singers will be involved in

- A major concert in the Music hall, as a prelude to the singers working with the BBC Scottish Symphony orchestra
- An informal lunchtime concert at the Music hall
- A major evening Opera and Song event at the University of Aberdeen
- Public master class sessions
- Placements as in 2009
- Opportunity to perform as part of the 'AIYF Up Close and Musical' sessions.

6.4 Selection Process and auditions

All City schoolchildren will be given the opportunity to apply with information being sent to and disseminated by Head Teachers. It will also be publicised through the University of Aberdeen Music department, North East Scotland Music School, Aberdeen City Music School, the Instrumental Music service director and the School Music service and a general press release. The three or four individuals will be selected through application, with recording or audition, by Tim Dean, Head of Royal Scottish Academy Music and Drama school, Mark Hathaway, Director of RSAMD, and Stewart Aitken, Artistic director of AIYF.

7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Resources Management Committee report 5 May 2009
 Mary Garden Opera Fund