



ROYAL
OPERA
HOUSE

22 MARCH 2016

Thurrock's Weekend of Song with Royal Opera House

Singers from across the Borough perform in London and Thurrock

Singers from across Thurrock were given the opportunity to show off their talents on Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 March as the Royal Opera House hosted a Big Sing event and the Royal Opera House Thurrock Community Chorus performed at London's Southbank Centre.

Young voices were raised in song on Saturday as the Royal Opera House Big Sing came to South Essex College in Grays. 60 young people aged between 8-25 years from across Thurrock came together for a morning of singing with the fantastic acapella singers **The Sons of Pitches**. The singing actually began on Friday when six Thurrock secondary schools attended the Thameside Theatre for a special Big Sing schools event. More than 80 students joined together in song and raised the roof.

The Big Sing is open to all so the young people came with a diverse range of musical and singing experience but a real passion to learn new skills, try out different styles and join together to create an exciting and dynamic piece of work. Royal Opera House vocal leaders **Jeremy Haneman** and **Stuart Overington** offered some expert advice about using and developing the voice and the group produced a unique piece with a *West Side Story* theme, which was performed to friends and family at the end of the morning.

Royal Opera House Young Vocal Leaders carried on the singing in the afternoon with a more advanced Big Sing. The Young Vocal Leaders have each been

creating their own choirs within the community over the last six months, and on Saturday, they brought their choirs together to showcase their work, performing opera and other popular pieces to friends and family. The Young Vocal Leaders also demonstrated their skills by leading the audience in a range of vocal warm ups and rounds.

Performing at London's Southbank Centre as part of their annual Chorus Festival (18-20 March) was a significant moment for the Royal Opera House Thurrock Community Chorus as they celebrate their fifth anniversary this year. More than 90 members of the Chorus travelled to London for the performance in the Clore Ballroom at the Royal Festival Hall, conducted by their Musical Director Jeremy Haneman and accompanied by Assistant Musical Director Michalis Angelakis.

The ROH Thurrock Community Chorus sang a mixed repertory of opera and popular show tunes such as *Chorus of Scottish Refugees* from *Macbeth* by Verdi, *Lean on Me* by Bill Withers, Bernstein's *America* from *West Side Story* as well as works by Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov. Members of the Chorus also sang solos throughout the programme and introduced pieces.

Matt Lane, Head of Thurrock and Thames Gateway, Royal Opera House said: "What a great time we've had, enjoying the extraordinary sounds of Thurrock voices enlivening the Thameside Theatre, the South Essex College in Grays and on Sunday, Southbank Centre in London! It is particularly encouraging to see the diversity of participation from the Young Vocal Leader programme inspiring their peers and friends through to freshly formed community ensembles taking the stage for the first time and culminating with the magnificent sound of the Royal Opera House Thurrock Community Chorus singing challenging repertory off-score with great gusto. Each of these projects have roots and connections to Royal Opera House Learning and Participation programme and we look forward to working with even more singers across Thurrock in the future. Congratulations to all involved!"

INC photo.

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Notes for Editors

Royal Opera House Learning and Participation in Thurrock

Royal Opera House Learning and Participation in Thurrock has been offering innovative and creative projects and programmes in schools, colleges and across communities in the Thames Gateway since 2006.

Since then, more than 60,000 people have participated in activities ranging from schools projects to teacher training, from work-based learning to fully-staged community operas. People in Thurrock have both been able to watch special performances at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden and gain a very special insight into the behind-the-scenes process.

The Learning and Participation team runs the Royal Opera House Thurrock Community Chorus which currently has over 140 members of all ages and regularly performs across Thurrock and at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden. For further information, please go to: www.roh.org.uk/learning/learning-in-thurrock/community-chorus. Details of future performances and taster session for the Community Chorus can be obtained by emailing getinvolved@roh.org.uk or calling 01708 891200.

Regular public tours of the state-of-the-art Bob and Tamar Manoukian Production Workshop where the sets and scenery for the Royal Opera House stage in Covent Garden are built, and the Bob and Tamar Manoukian Costume Centre which opened in October 2015, are now available. Please go to www.roh.org.uk/visit/tours/thurrock-tours for further details. Inspiration Days offer a more in-depth look at the work of the Production Workshop. More information can be found at www.roh.org.uk/inspiration

In April 2012, the Royal Opera House agreed to become a [Bridge](#) organisation, working to connect children and young people to great art and culture across Essex, North Kent, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire.

The Learning and Participation team is based at the High House Production Park in Purfleet. High House Production Park is supported by a unique partnership including Arts Council England, Creative & Cultural Skills, the Royal Opera House and Thurrock Council: www.hhpp.org.uk

Southbank Centre

Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre, occupying a 21-acre site that sits in the midst of London's most vibrant cultural quarter on the South Bank of the Thames. The site has an extraordinary creative and architectural history stretching back to the 1951 Festival of Britain. Southbank Centre is home to the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and the Hayward Gallery as well as The Saison Poetry Library and the Arts Council Collection. For further information, please visit www.southbankcentre.co.uk. We are carrying out vital restoration work on the Hayward Gallery, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Purcell Room to make the buildings fit for future generations to enjoy, more information can be found here: letthelightin.southbankcentre.co.uk.