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PRESS RELEASE

Friday 8 July 2016

Claiming the Sky

**FUSED 2016: Fifth birthday celebration for the Royal Opera
House Thurrock Community Chorus**

Sunday 24 July 2016 at 6.30pm
Civic Hall, Blackshots Lane, Grays, Thurrock RM16 2JU
Tickets £8-£10
Box Office 020 7304 4000

The Royal Opera House Thurrock Community Chorus celebrates its fifth birthday on Sunday 24 July with FUSED 2016 at the Civic Hall in Grays. Special guests and Royal Opera House Young Vocal Leaders join the Chorus to showcase five years of singing across Thurrock.

FUSED 2016 features a fantastic selection of diverse and dynamic music including the world premiere of a newly commissioned song cycle entitled, *I Claim the Sky*. The piece was composed especially for Thurrock by **John Barber** with writer **Hazel Gould**, working with Thurrock communities.

In creating *I Claim The Sky*, John and Hazel asked local residents about Thurrock and discovered a place of constant change in its landscape and its population. *I Claim the Sky* takes the theme of migration, specifically the migration of birds, as a way to reflect the changing landscape and communities, as well as reflecting on the current issue of global human migration.

The RSPB site at Rainham inspired the idea of birds as the central image of the

song cycle. The first movement *Swifts* was written with pupils from East Tilbury Primary School. The pupils were given a brief to use swifts as their inspiration and their imaginations did the rest to put together the evocative text and melodies.

Waxwings, the second movement, was devised by students at **Hassenbrook Academy** and **The Royal Opera House Thurrock Community Chorus** helped create the final movement; *Falcons*.

John Barber and **Hazel Gould** said of their work in Thurrock: “It was really exciting to create parts of the text and music with young people from Thurrock and members of the Royal Opera House Thurrock Community Chorus. The images and musical ideas they produced were surprising and complex and have given a unique flavour to the piece.”

From its origin in *Ludd and Isis: The Thurrock Opera* in 2010 to its formation as a distinct group in 2011 to recent years performing at events across Thurrock and London, the Royal Opera House Thurrock Community Chorus has gone from strength to strength. It now boasts more than 140 regular members and tackles a broad and ambitious repertory.

The Royal Opera House Thurrock Community Chorus are joined in FUSED 2016 by young people who, in March, took part in the Big Sing, members of the Royal Opera House Young Vocal Leaders programme and professional soloists.

The concert takes place at the Civic Hall in Grays at 6.30pm on Sunday 24 July. Tickets are £10 and concessions £8 and can be purchased from the Royal Opera House Box Office by calling **020 7304 4000** or by booking on line at www.roh.org.uk/productions/fused. To find out more about the Royal Opera House Thurrock Community Chorus or any of the singing programmes in Thurrock, please email getinvolved@roh.org.uk or call 01708 891200.

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PRESS OFFICE CONTACTS

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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 which is supported by a unique partnership including Arts Council England, Creative & Cultural Skills, the Royal Opera House and Thurrock Council:
www.hhpp.org.uk