



PRESS RELEASE

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Benyon Primary School gets Chance to Dance and Sing

Royal Opera House Thurrock Trailblazer school, Benyon Primary, has been working for the past term on three Royal Opera House national education programmes: **Chance to Dance, Create and Sing Carmen** and **National Nutcracker**. Through these programmes, Benyon students have learnt about ballet and opera.

The **Chance to Dance** programme has run weekly creative ballet classes for Year 3 students. Chance to Dance offers access to ballet for those who might not otherwise have had the opportunity to experience the art form. The children have been learning about ballets through the ages including **Swan Lake** and **Romeo and Juliet**. A number of students have been nominated to audition for the Chance to Dance ballet company, an opportunity which will allow them to develop further their ballet skills.

Ninety students from Years 4, 5 and 6 have been working very hard each week towards their production of **Carmen** which they have put together using the resources of the **Create and Sing Carmen** programme. This new Royal Opera House national singing programme is being piloted in ten Thurrock primary schools this term. Students are learning to sing opera repertory, to build a performance and how to sing healthily. All ten schools will perform their version of **Carmen**, in assemblies and to parents in their school setting.

'I thought opera was very boring and dull but now I really like it.'

Bree, Year 4

Create and Sing Carmen has been a big hit with Year 4 students. Mason said, 'Many people don't like opera, but I do – it's fun and exciting.' Nicola said, 'I think opera is the best thing in the world – I loved learning all those songs and I loved the acting.' Olamide commented, 'I'm very grateful I had this opportunity, it has changed my opinion of it (opera)' and Ekaterina is equally enthusiastic: '*Carmen* has changed my whole thoughts about opera, I would love to do more!'

The National Nutcracker programme provides teachers with the skills and resources to deliver weekly classes about Tchaikovsky's ballet, and about choreography and dance. Year 5 students have just submitted a film of their choreography, and are now looking forward to a cinema screening of *The Nutcracker* at the Vue Cinema in Lakeside on 6 December.

Benyon Primary School has chosen to work with these programmes as part of their Thurrock Trailblazer selection this year. Thurrock Trailblazer is an innovative programme of high quality arts and cultural activities, visits to heritage sites and specialist teacher training, which boosts creative learning in schools and accelerates pupils' development. Benyon have also selected to visit Coalhouse Fort and the Tower of London as part of Royal Opera House Thurrock Trailblazer this year.

To find out more about Royal Opera House Thurrock Trailblazer, please go to www.roh.org.uk/trailblazer.

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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.

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