

For Immediate Release

17 June 2019

1,500 pupils from schools across the UK will perform *Carmen* at **London's Olympic Park**

Over 1,500 pupils from 40 schools nationwide will come together to perform in the UK's largest ever staging of *Carmen*, at the Olympic Park on Wednesday 26th June.

The performance of Bizet's *Carmen* is the culmination of a year-long project inspired by the Royal Opera House's Create and Sing programme in partnership with United Learning, English Pocket Opera Company and The Voices Foundation.

From Accrington in the North West to Shoreham on the South coast, pupils from schools across the country will come together for what will undoubtedly be a once-in-a-lifetime moment. The project is part of United Learning's commitment to deliver an Education with Character for pupils – an education which provides a breadth of opportunities and experiences and helps them become confident, well-rounded and ambitious young adults.

The colourful and energetic performance, staged and directed by the English Pocket Opera Company is set to delight more than 1,000 spectators, including guests from the world of opera, music and education. Supported by four professional singers and a 14-piece orchestra, United Learning pupils have worked for six months to bring this dynamic new show to the stage. The performance will include singing, dance, narration, marching bands and instrumental performances including the Sambinos from North Oxfordshire Academy.

The Royal Opera House's free-to-use Create and Sing programme, which includes intensive teacher training and a suite of curriculum-linked digital resources and lesson plans encourages pupils to embrace musical culture and enjoy opera and by participating in and performing it.

Catherine Barker, Head of Music and Performing Arts at United Learning, said:

“There is a real air of excitement at our schools as pupils prepare for this unique performance. Whilst all the pupils have been rehearsing for months in their individual schools, they will not come together as one company until the day of the performance itself. The sound of 1,500 pupils is going to be absolutely

brehtaking and I am sure that experience of performing in London's Olympic Park will create fantastic memories for the pupils.

"We have been very fortunate to partner the Royal Opera House, the Voices Foundation and the English Pocket Opera Company. Together, we have opened up the world of opera to our pupils and sown the seeds for a lifelong love of music and performance."

Amy McGann, Head of National Programmes at the Royal Opera House, said:

"This is a hugely exciting moment, not just for the Royal Opera House but for the more than 1,500 young people who will come together and perform Carmen. Through our *Create and Sing Carmen* programme, we have worked with teachers up and down the country so that almost 16,000 young people can engage with dramatic singing in a way which wouldn't be possible through the school curriculum. It is wonderful to see that a love of opera and the arts is being sparked in so many of these young people and we look forward to continuing this work in the coming years."

Rebecca Le Brocq- CEO, The Voices Foundation

"We are absolutely thrilled to be a part of this truly unique and once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for children and teachers. Our Choral Directors have stated what a privilege it has been to provide bespoke choral training to school teachers from United Learning tailored to their needs, all the while supporting the vocal development of their pupils in the long term. We have seen tremendous progress made in all of our training sessions and have been overwhelmed with positive feedback from many of the staff members involved in the project. *Carmen! A United Learning Opera* has had a transformative impact on everyone involved and we are thankful to United Learning, The Royal Opera House, and English Pocket Opera Company for working with us to bring this project to life"

Mark Tinkler, Founder and Artistic Director at English Pocket Opera Company, said:

"I am delighted that in this, our 25th Anniversary season, English Pocket Opera Company can share our SingFest project with the dynamic United Learning and their excellent schools. We have been presenting opera for and with children since 1994, in a multitude of political and economic climates, and understand what a difference a project such as this can make in the life of a child. Our large-scale performances have engaged with tens of thousands of children over the years, and have seen many go into the arts themselves. We are thrilled to be collaborating with the Royal Opera House and The Voices Foundation to bring the best training and resources for these children."

PRESS OPPORTUNITY

There will be a press call at 6.15pm on Wednesday 26 June at the Copper Box Arena, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

Representatives from each of the participating organisations as well as teachers and pupils will be available for interview.

There will also be an opportunity to film and take photos of the performance.

If you would like to attend, please contact: ben.oliver@roh.org.uk

Notes to Editors

1. **United Learning is a national schools group uniquely comprising both state academies and independent schools, all working towards a shared aim of bringing out ‘the best in everyone’. The Group is committed to providing all pupils with an Education with Character – one which enables young people to try new things, grow their cultural capital and gain the wider skills and attributes they need to be successful in today’s world.**
2. **The following schools are due to perform:**
 - Abbey Hey Primary Academy (Manchester)
 - Accrington Academy
 - Bacon’s College (London)
 - Banstead Prep School (Surrey)
 - Barnsley Academy
 - Castle View Academy (Portsmouth)
 - Coworth Flexlands Prep School (Surrey)
 - Goresbrook School (London)
 - Grange Primary Academy (Kettering)
 - Hampshire Collegiate School
 - Hanwell Fields Community School (Banbury)
 - High Hazels Academy (Sheffield)
 - Hill View Primary School (Banbury)
 - Hull Collegiate School (and Prep School)
 - The Hyndburn Academy
 - John Smeaton Academy (Leeds)
 - Kettering Buccleuch Academy
 - Lambeth Academy

- Lincoln Minster School and Prep School
- Longshaw Primary Academy (London)
- North Oxfordshire Academy
- Northampton Academy
- Paddington Academy
- PHC Hitchin
- The Hurlingham Academy (London)
- The Hyndburn Academy (Lancashire)
- Seahaven Academy (East Sussex)
- Sedgehill School (London)
- Sheffield Park Academy
- Sheffield Springs Academy
- Shoreham Academy
- The Totteridge Academy (London)
- Walthamstow Academy
- Walthamstow Primary Academy
- Wilberforce Primary School (London)
- William Hulme's Grammar School (Manchester)
- Winston Way (London)

About The Royal Opera House

The Royal Opera House presents more than 400 performances at the iconic Covent Garden theatre in London, each year and reaches an audience of more than 700,000. Beyond that people enjoyed our work across the globe through our ROH Cinema Season, World Ballet Day, Royal Opera House YouTube Channel (which has more than 500,000 subscribers), BP Big Screens and other online and interactive projects. The Royal Opera House also plays a leading role through our Learning and Participation Department, community engagement, skills development, professional training and cultural regeneration in the UK.

The English Pocket Opera Company was founded in 1993 and, since 2001, has worked solely for the benefit of children and young people. Working with up to 50,000 children per year, it produces musically-driven, multi-disciplinary programmes in partnership with a range of social, artistic and educational organisations that are: tailored to individual needs of schools and communities; designed to achieve broad educational and social impact; and build capacity for long-term sustainability.

The Voices Foundation is an award-winning national music education charity that uses the power of singing to improve the lives of children and young people. Every year they help 15,000 children from over 70 schools sing regularly. Founded 25 years ago, The Voices Foundation has worked with over 600,000 children and 20,000 teachers.

Further information about the project is available from Anna Lemer on 020 3006 5890.