

opera
north

Making
Music
Works



The work of Opera North in creating music for people in Leeds, Yorkshire, across the North and around the world was a heartfelt passion for my grandfather, Dr Keith Howard OBE. On a personal level I know that he found immense joy through experiencing the Company's work and took even greater pleasure in being able to play a key role in supporting Opera North to make that work accessible to all.

His support of the Music Works transformation was driven by the belief that everyone, artists and members of the community alike, should have the opportunity to experience and make music. I know that he would have taken as much delight in watching the orchestra and chorus rehearse in their new home as he would in seeing children and young people receiving music tuition in the new education studio. His wish was that Opera North had a home fit to support its ambitious programme of work and community outreach well into the future, and I am sure he would have been delighted by what has been achieved in the creation of the Howard Opera Centre and Howard Assembly Room.

Melissa Tomlinson
Chair, The Keith Howard Foundation

The completion of Music Works is the culmination of a 20-year project to establish a permanent home for Opera North in the heart of Leeds. This hugely ambitious and complex scheme has delivered a range of beautiful new public spaces, but what matters most is the positive difference these spaces are already making to Opera North's artists, staff and participants. It's this which this brief document aims to celebrate.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to everyone who has been involved through the years in the delivery of this transformative project, and to the many individuals and organisations whose financial support has made it possible, above all the late Dr Keith Howard OBE. We are confident that the benefits of Music Works will be felt by people throughout the communities of Leeds and beyond for many years to come. To all who have made Music Works, a heartfelt 'thank you'.

Paul Lee OBE Chairman of the Board of Trustees
Richard Mantle OBE General Director/CEO

Making Music Works

Enjoy Design

Architect and Principal Designer

Henry Boot Construction

Principal Contractor

Richard Boothroyd & Associates

Project Manager

Commercial Services Design

Mechanical and Electrical Consultant

Curtins

Structural Engineer

Fresh Element

Restaurant Consultant

Richard Lewis

Chair, Project Steering Group

Richard Mantle OBE

Chair, Building Project Board

Rex Proctor & Partners

Quantity Surveyor

Stroma

Acoustic Consultant

StructEco

Howard Opera Centre office/Kino restaurant fit out contractor

With thanks to:

Leeds Grand Theatre

Making Music Works – A Timeline

2018

March 22nd – Opera North announces an ambitious redevelopment project for its estate in central Leeds



Richard Mantle OBE and Baroness Blake of Leeds (Leader, Leeds City Council 2015-21), August 2018

August 23rd – The project is greenlit following the granting of planning permission and listed building consent by Leeds City Council

October 8th – ‘Music Works’ is announced as the name for the fundraising campaign, which is launched with a donation of £11.25 million by Dr Keith Howard OBE – one of the largest single gifts ever committed to such a project in the UK. The overall target for Music Works is £18 million



Alleyway between the Howard Assembly Room (left) and Leeds Grand Theatre (right), December 2018

2019

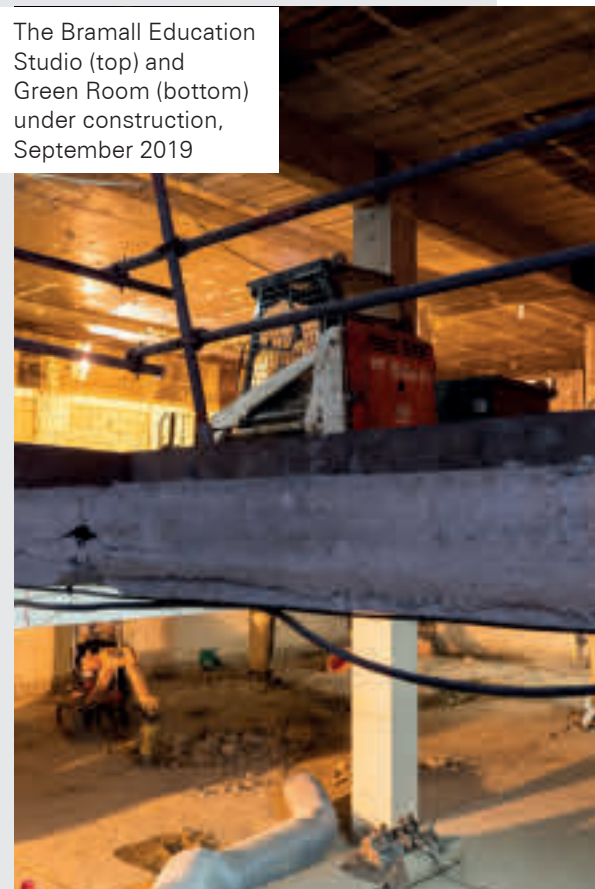
January 28th – Further major gifts are announced, including £1 million from The Liz and Terry Bramall Foundation

May 14th – Final event in the Howard Assembly Room before it is handed over to the contractor

May 17th – Opera North occupies a temporary base at Gateway East and temporary rehearsal facilities at Whitehall Road in Leeds

May 20th – Construction work commences as the contractors, Henry Boot Construction, take possession of the Company’s premises on Harrison Street

The Bramall Education Studio (top) and Green Room (bottom) under construction, September 2019

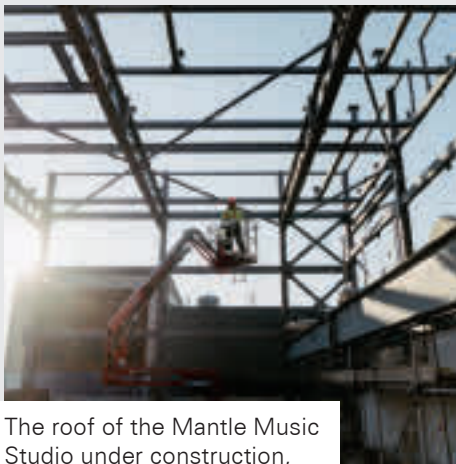


'Music Works will be fantastic for the city and its residents. What was once a row of derelict shops and a Victorian service alleyway will be a vibrant centre for residents and visitors alike to meet, socialise, relax and enjoy the performing arts.'

Jonathan Watkins, Project Manager, Henry Boot Construction, November 2020

2020

January 21st – Opera North announces that its redeveloped home will be named the Howard Opera Centre in recognition of Keith Howard's exceptional generosity

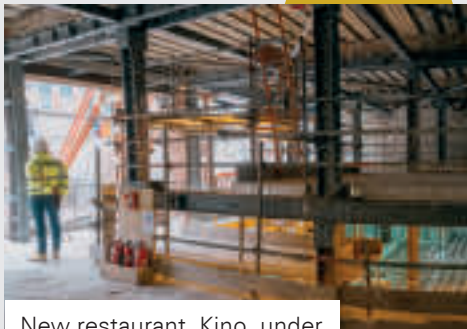


The roof of the Mantle Music Studio under construction, January 2020

March 23rd – UK enters a national lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Following a four-week pause, construction work gradually resumes, though significant challenges continue to delay the project over the next 12 months. These include the impact of the disease itself on the contractor and subcontractor teams in the period before a vaccine was available, and interruptions to the supply of essential materials such as brick, steel and cement

November 27th – Play Your Part campaign launched to raise remaining funds for the project

2021



New restaurant, Kino, under construction, March 2021

July 22nd – First orchestral rehearsal in the Mantle Music Studio to test the acoustics of the room, which has been designed to place paramount importance on the safety of the musicians

August 2nd – The Opera North Youth Chorus's Summer Project is the first Education activity to take place in the Howard Opera Centre

August 16th – First rehearsals in the Howard Opera Centre for a mainstage production – *Carmen* – begin in the Harewood Studio

October 6th – The Howard Assembly Room re-opens with 'Open Doors'

October 25th – Opera North holds its first ever Open Week

The completed atrium on the opening night of Opera North's new season, October 2021

2022



July 6th – The opening of Kino, Opera North's restaurant on New Briggate, marks the completion of Music Works – 'the final piece in the puzzle' in the words of the Company's General Director, Richard Mantle



Music Works **With** Everyone



The Music Works project has delivered world-class facilities for making music and art in Leeds and the North. Together, the new Howard Opera Centre, the revitalised Howard Assembly Room with its beautiful public spaces and atrium, and a long-awaited restaurant, Kino, on New Briggate, all boost our mission to create extraordinary experiences with and for everyone in our region and beyond.



◀ Music Works has created outstanding rehearsal facilities for the Company and its many guest artists from around the world. The new **Mantle Music Studio** hosts large-scale orchestral rehearsals, chorus repertoire calls, and *sitzprobe*. At the mezzanine level, the Gabbertas Gallery allows singers covering roles and others to observe rehearsals.



◀ The Howard Assembly Room re-opened in October 2021 with **Open Doors**, an event which gave a glimpse of the extraordinary diversity of the programming in Opera North's 'second space'. The gig featured performances from singer-songwriter Thabo (pictured), turntablist and sound artist NikNak and virtuoso multi-instrumentalist Vijay Venkat, all of whom have been part of Opera North's annual Resonance residencies.

'To have managed to create this amazing facility for the arts in Opera North's home town of Leeds is a magnificent achievement. None of it could have happened without the support of so many people whose remarkable generosity has been so gratefully received.'

Paul Lee, Chairman of the Board of Trustees



◀ **One front door for all:** everyone who comes to Opera North – artists, staff, students, participants, community partners – shares the same entrance to the Howard Opera Centre which leads to an open, welcoming and accessible Reception area.



◀ **Behind the scenes,** Music Works has delivered a vastly improved working environment for Opera North's hugely talented workforce. It also helps us to make the processes of production more transparent – for example, opening up the costume department to visitors during Opera North's Open Day in October 2021.

▶ The Howard Opera Centre provides **new and enhanced facilities** in which Opera North can create more of the unique and innovative productions for which it is renowned – productions such as the groundbreaking colour-conscious production of Verdi's *Rigoletto* with which distinguished British-Nigerian theatre-maker Femi Elufowoju jr made his opera-directing debut. *Rigoletto* was conducted by Opera North's Music Director Garry Walker, pictured here in rehearsal with Jasmine Habersham who sang the role of Gilda.



Music Works has delivered a hub for Opera North's nationally-recognised education work – not only in the dedicated Bramall Education Studio and Holbeck Teaching Room, but also in the Mantle Music Studio where young musicians play side by side with Opera North's professionals. We believe that people are never too young, and never too old, to learn and create; and the facilities of the Howard Opera Centre enable us to expand and enrich participation for everyone, whatever their age, whatever their background.



Following the Opera North Youth Chorus into the Howard Opera Centre in summer 2021 were the **Summer Strings and Orchestra Academies**, in which the young people rehearsed and performed alongside Opera North's professional musicians.

Situated on the ground floor of the Howard Opera Centre, the Education Suite includes the **Bramall Education Studio** and **Holbeck Teaching Room**. This new hub, together with the Mantle Music Studio, provides state of the art facilities for Opera North's nationally-recognised work with young people.

◀ Opera North opened its doors in October 2021 with a week-long series of events, including a Family Festival. Highlights included special sessions of **Little ONes** for 0-4 year-olds in the Bramall Education Studio.

'I really enjoyed doing something in Leeds over the course of a week in this amazing new space'

Magnus on the Opera North Youth Company Summer Project, August 2021



▲ The **Opera North Youth Company** rehearsed their production of Hans Krása's children's opera *Brundibár* in the Mantle Music Studio ahead of performances in the Howard Assembly Room and at Sage Gateshead.

◀ The first people to make music and drama in the Howard Opera Centre ahead of its official opening were members of the **Opera North Youth Chorus** during their Summer Project in August 2021.

▶ Opera North's commitment to lifelong learning embraces older people as well as children and young people. The new, more accessible facilities of the Howard Opera Centre enable us to welcome people of all ages into our home, for activities such as **Melodic Memories** for people living with dementia and their carers.



Music Works For Everyone



The Howard Opera Centre is a place for everyone to sing, play, learn, create, participate and collaborate. It is a place where we are better able to share the extraordinary experiences we make with all the communities we serve; where we can inspire and nurture everyone's creativity, whatever their circumstances; and which has accessibility and sustainability at its core.

▲ **Environmental sustainability** has informed many of the design decisions during the redevelopment project. For example, no gas is used in Kino, the new bar and restaurant, as part of a longer-term aspiration to remove gas entirely from the Opera North estate. 51 photovoltaic panels have been installed on the roof of the Howard Opera Centre, reducing our reliance on the National Grid for electricity, thereby reducing our carbon footprint.



◀ As part of the celebrations surrounding the re-opening of the Howard Assembly Room in October 2021, Opera North held its first **Theatre of Sanctuary** Open Mic Night, hosted by singer-songwriter Thandanani Gumede. Opera North is the first opera company in the country to have been awarded Theatre of Sanctuary status in recognition of its ongoing work to provide a welcome for refugees and people seeking asylum.

'We had a fantastic afternoon. Sang along with *Carmen*. Had a fascinating backstage tour and then had the absolute privilege of watching the masterclass. I am in awe of such vocal and teaching talent.'

Alan Marsden, via Twitter, on the Opera North Open Day

▶ We invited the whole community behind the scenes at the Howard Opera Centre and Howard Assembly Room for an **Open Day** and **Family Festival** in October 2021. More than 1,000 people joined us for performances and participation in workshops, masterclasses and taster sessions, as we shared with them the transformational effect of Music Works.



Music Works is helping us give a warmer welcome than ever to our **Community Partners**. In December 2021, the Howard Assembly Room was host to our Encore Christmas Party. More than 70 groups and organisations are members of Opera North's Encore scheme, which opens up our work to those who would otherwise face significant barriers to engaging with the arts.



◀ Our new home enables us to enhance our commitment to making music work for the whole community, such as composer and tabla player Mendi Mohinder Singh's **Resonance residency** in the Harewood Studio, in which he made a new piece of percussive music with visually impaired people via Leeds BID Services.



'An amazing project that I thoroughly enjoyed and which helped me feel like a part of a community and to be creative during a difficult period.'

Writing Home participant

▶ We wanted the voices of our communities to be part of the fabric of the Howard Opera Centre. To this end, we worked with children and young people, community groups and members of the public, to write songs on the theme of 'home', such as 'It's a Place Where I Call Home' by Black Health Initiative (pictured). The resulting project, **Writing Home**, now forms an interactive musical trail around the building.





Already celebrated for the originality and diversity of its programming, the Howard Assembly Room re-opened in October 2021 with an expanded programme of events. With its own front door and dedicated public spaces, this unique and historic venue now has far greater public presence in the city. Downstairs, Kino is a place where everyone can meet, eat, drink and relax.



◀ As well as the spacious Mantle Music Studio and Bramall Education Studio, the Howard Opera Centre also contains new music rooms designed for one-to-one coaching and smaller practice sessions: these are the **Ziff**, **Pettman** and **Torridon Music Rooms**. Here, Susannah Simmons, Adam Mackenzie, Supriya Nagarajan and Duncan Chapman rehearse for a concert in the Howard Assembly Room.

▶ Whilst Music Works has made our buildings more **welcoming and accessible** for everyone, it hasn't diminished our commitment to taking our work out into the heart of our communities, such as the latest in our series of Whistle Stop Operas, *A Tale of Orpheus* and *Eurydice*.



◀ With most orchestral rehearsals now taking place in the Mantle Music Studio, the **Howard Assembly Room** has reopened with an expanded programme of classical and contemporary music, gigs, talks and films, enabling us to present even more of today's most innovative artists and music-makers.

▶ The magnificent stone and brickwork arches of George Corson's original 1870s design of the building have been expertly restored and incorporated into the frontage of **Kino**, Opera North's restaurant on New Briggate.



▶ The Howard Assembly Room's stunning atrium has delivered **a new architectural landmark** in the heart of Leeds for everyone to enjoy.

The Howard Assembly Room is also a place for **creative participation** for people of all ages, including Opera North's Youth Ensembles.

'I just wanted to say how wonderful the concert was on Saturday. The standard and level of professionalism was absolutely incredible – my husband and I were blown away. The girls had such a fantastic experience taking part and they sang the whole way home on the bus!'

Parent of Opera North Youth Company members on ONYC Spring Concert 2022 in the Howard Assembly Room





Dr Keith Howard OBE 1931-2021

Keith Howard was the single most generous benefactor of Opera North in the Company's history, culminating in his personal donation of more than £11 million to the Music Works project in 2018.

It was the success of his publishing company Emerald that enabled Keith to direct significant sums to Opera North and to his other chosen causes. In 2009 he created the Emerald Foundation (now The Keith Howard Foundation), which makes grants to charities in West Yorkshire in the fields of sport, performing arts and animal welfare.

Keith and his wife Pat became devoted supporters of Opera North after its formation in 1978 and his support for the Company grew exponentially over the decades. At first it took the form of membership

of the Friends and modest levels of donation. After a visit to Leeds Grand Theatre in 2003 he made significant contributions towards the Transformation fundraising campaign, both personally and through the Emerald Foundation. The Transformation project delivered major improvements to backstage facilities and the restoration of the Assembly Room adjacent to the theatre as a performance space. This was named the Howard Assembly Room in recognition of Keith's generosity. Thereafter, the Emerald Foundation made substantial donations to the Opera North Future Fund.

Without Keith as principal benefactor, the transformation wrought by Music Works would have been simply inconceivable. Our new home is named the Howard Opera Centre in his honour.

'My long-held passion for music has been nurtured by Opera North over many years and it is my belief that the Music Works project will enable the Company to pursue its ambition to bring music to everyone. These new world-class facilities will create the perfect environment for artists, participants and audiences to come together and experience the joy that music and music-making can bring.'

Dr Keith Howard OBE, October 2018

Top: Keith Howard with the late Rafael Rojas, Giselle Allen and Seckou Keita at the Music Works launch event in the Howard Assembly Room, June 2018

Music Works 2018 – 2022

The Music Works capital transformation was made possible by the extraordinary generosity of many individuals, trusts, foundations and public funders, led by the late Dr Keith Howard OBE, without whom the project would not have been possible.

Major supporters

Dr Keith Howard OBE
The Liz and Terry Bramall Foundation
Arts Council England
Leeds City Council
Garfield Weston Foundation
The Wolfson Foundation
The Foyle Foundation
The Marjorie and Arnold Ziff Charitable Foundation
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Andrew and Julia Lawson-Tancred
In memory of Anne Nelson
Howard Gatiss
Alexander Graham and
Rosie Millard

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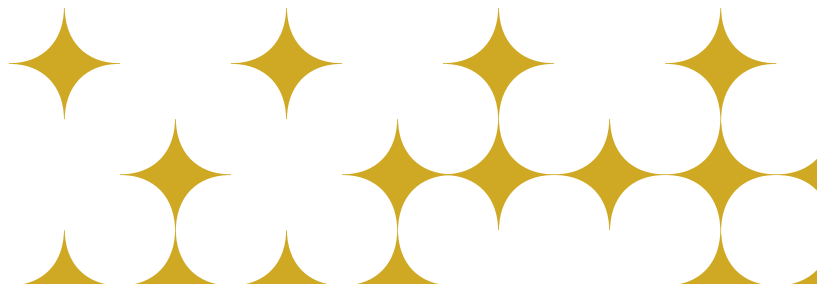
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And two anonymous donors

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