



KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER: ENGLISH COMPOSER 4

**BENJAMIN
BRITTEN
1913-1976**



- Britten was an English composer, conductor and pianist
- Britten is famous for writing lots of songs and operas. He brought British opera back to life!
- There is a famous 'Scallop' sculpture on the beach in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, to commemorate his life. Britten died in Aldeburgh and is buried in Aldeburgh. Words on the scallop read 'I hear those voices that will not be drowned.' These are lyrics from his opera, *Peter Grimes*
- Every year, there is a famous music festival in **Aldeburgh**. Britten started this festival
- Britten wrote a collection of songs called **Friday Afternoons** for the children at his brother's school in 1933. There is a project now called the *Friday Afternoon Project* to encourage children to sing more songs from a more 'classical' perspective
- Britten went to America at the start of World War 2 but returned in 1942. He became a *conscientious objector*. This meant he refused to fight. He believed that fighting was very bad
- Britten wrote a **War Requiem**. He wrote this for the new Coventry Cathedral. The new cathedral was built to replace the one that was destroyed in World War 2
- Britten could have been buried at Westminster Abbey, but the composer preferred not to

BRITTEN's most **SIGNIFICANT WORK** is the opera **PETER GRIMES** written in 1945

Here is the story outline in a nut shell—The story is based in a small fishing village in the east of England in the 1820s. At the start, Peter Grimes, a fisherman, has an apprentice working with him who sadly has an accident and dies at sea. The town's folk believe that Grimes is responsible and should be punished. Grimes really tries hard to 'fit in' and earn the respect of the town's folk but they are unwilling to forgive him. Peter Grimes feels like an outcast. By the end, Grimes takes on another apprentice who also accidentally dies. Grimes is so upset he drowns himself. *Britten wrote the lead part for his life-long partner Peter Pears to sing.*

Some of the scenes of the opera are joined by continuous music. This music is so beautiful that it is often played separately in concerts. This music is known as the **Four Sea Interludes**. They have the titles: **Dawn, Moonlight, Sunday Morning** and **Storm**. I love them!



Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra

*Britten wanted to highlight all the instruments in the orchestra for education and entertainment

*Each individual instrument and family of instruments has their moment to 'shine' so the audience gets to hear what each section sounds like on their own and together with the rest of the orchestra—very clever!

Interlude	A piece of music written to fill the space in the story of a larger work
Rondo	A musical form where a theme keeps returning. The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra has been written in Rondo form
Requiem	Music used for the ceremony in honouring those who have died.