

## Grimes on the Beach #3 The town gets ready



Banksy-esque graffiti murals of Britten are appearing around Aldeburgh

The town, cast and chorus gear up for two live concert performances of *Peter Grimes* at the weekend, and Christopher Gillett accidentally takes the scenic bus route to the recording session.



### Grimes on the Beach - Aldeburgh gets ready

It's been a busy week on Aldeburgh beach. The chorus, made up from the Opera North chorus and students from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, joined us for the very first time and what a lovely and utterly professional bunch they are too. Compared to my last experience in *Peter Grimes* in Milan, this is utter bliss. I'm trying to imagine La Scala's chorus rehearsing for six hours on an overcast and chilly Suffolk

beach, an easterly wind bringing with it the occasional biting drizzle... well, it simply wouldn't happen. This lot takes it in their stride. Yes, I know most of them live in Leeds and are no strangers to challenging weather but I haven't heard anybody complain. The only surprise was the so-called 'rake break' that has to be taken every hour, a quick 10-minute respite from standing on a sloping set; though I can't imagine the undulating shingle offers much in the way of relief. But rules are rules.

**They've been recording the score to accompany us for the beach performances, making it possibly the most complex karaoke tape in musical history**

While we've been working on the beach - what a luxury it is to be living less than a minute from the stage - Stuart Bedford has been at the Snape Maltings rehearsing the Britten-Pears Orchestra. Terribly good and terribly young, they will accompany us in two concerts this weekend, the first of which will be broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 and from which there will also be a CD. Not only that, but they've been recording the entire score, without singers, to accompany us for the beach performances, making it possibly the most complex karaoke tape in musical history. We're in the middle of a session right now, recording the offstage church music for Act Two. I took a bus from Aldeburgh, failing to spot that it also went via Leiston and Knodishall, and only made it to the Maltings five minutes before the red light.

It's a strange experience for the orchestra; they're living with this opera every day, yet they are all due to leave town after the concerts and will never see what we're doing on the beach, let alone hear their own contribution.

### It's like rehearsing an opera on the deck of a cross-Channel ferry

The weather has taken a sharp turn for the better in the last few days and the sun is blazing. The easterly wind, though, is still strong and chilly, about Force 6 today. Until that drops or moves to another quarter we'll have to keep wrapping up well. It's like rehearsing an opera on the deck of a cross-Channel ferry. I'm not sure if anybody has actually tried that yet, but I guess it can now only be a matter of time before someone stages *Billy Budd* on the *Pride of Calais*.



The town, meanwhile, is gearing itself up for the Festival. A pop-up restaurant will soon be erected on the seafront, bundles of asparagus sit in the delis, the fish-smoker is working overtime and piles of Britten-related books (including mine, fancy that!) are stacked in the bookshop. And with the stench of shameless plugging hanging in the air I must return to the breezy beach to rehearse my aria.

[www.brittenaldeburgh.co.uk](http://www.brittenaldeburgh.co.uk) - [Grimes on the Beach \(http://www.brittenaldeburgh.co.uk/whats-on/event/grimes-aldeburgh%20\)](http://www.brittenaldeburgh.co.uk/whats-on/event/grimes-aldeburgh%20)

[christophergillett.co.uk](http://christophergillett.co.uk) (<http://www.christophergillett.co.uk/index.htm>)

[saddoabroad.blogspot.com](http://saddoabroad.blogspot.com/) (<http://saddoabroad.blogspot.com/>)

Read Christopher Gillett's first two blog diaries, [Grimes on the Beach #1 \(http://sinfinimusic.com/uk/features/2013/05/grimes-on-the-beach-1/\)](http://sinfinimusic.com/uk/features/2013/05/grimes-on-the-beach-1/) and [Grimes on the Beach #2](http://sinfinimusic.com/uk/features/2013/05/grimes-on-the-beach-2/)

[\(/uk/features/blogs/christopher-gillett/grimes-on-the-beach-2\)](http://sinfinimusic.com/uk/features/blogs/christopher-gillett/grimes-on-the-beach-2/) Discover the story and characters of Britten's opera in our [Peter Grimes Opera Strip \(http://sinfinimusic.com/uk/features/2013/04/opera-strip-peter-grimes/\)](http://sinfinimusic.com/uk/features/2013/04/opera-strip-peter-grimes/).