

31st January, 1956.

ENGLISH OPERA GROUP LIMITEDFURTHER REPORT BY THE GENERAL MANAGER ON THE ARTISTIC
POSSIBILITIES FOR 1956, AND THE FINANCIAL ASPECTS THEREOF

It is proposed to mount the following new productions and revivals:-

- New Productions: (a) RUTH (a new opera by Lennox Berkeley
with libretto by Eric Crozier)
(b) ALBERT HERRING (Britten)
(c) VENUS AND ADONIS (John Blow)
(d) SAVITRI (Holst)
- Revivals: # → (e) THE TURN OF THE SCREW (Britten)
(f) LET'S MAKE AN OPERA! (Britten-Crozier)

N.B. It is proposed to present (c) and (d) in Aldeburgh as a double bill, and (a) and (c) as a double bill in London and possibly in the provinces.

The following engagements are under discussion:-

May	: Paris	:(e)
	: Zurich and Geneva:	(e)
June	: Aldeburgh	:(c), (d), and (f)

For the above engagements it is hoped that the total running expenses will be covered by the aggregate fees.

September-October- November	: A season in London or two or three weeks, to be followed by a four-week provincial tour; all the above operas to be included in the repertory, except "Savitri".
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It is anticipated that these seven weeks may involve an average loss of £500 a week.

Financial aspects of the above proposals

PRODUCTION COSTS:	£
Ruth	2,650
Venus and Adonis	2,350
Albert Herring	1,550
The Turn of the Screw	450
Let's Make an Opera!	600
Savitri (costs to be paid by Aldeburgh Festival)	---
	<u>7,600</u>
LOSS on London Season and Provincial Tour	3,500
OVERHEADS	<u>3,000</u>
	14,100
ANTICIPATED REVENUE:	
Brought forward from Film Première	1,750
E.O.G. Association	<u>1,500</u>
	<u>3,250</u>
DEFICIT, to be covered by grants from Arts Council and other sources	£10,850

THE ENGLISH OPERA GROUP LIMITED

DIRECTORS' REPORT for the year ended 31st December, 1955

PRESIDENT: The Earl of Harewood
DIRECTORS: Mr. J. H. Lawrie (Chairman)
Mr. Isador Caplan
Mr. Anthony Gishford
Lord Horder
Sir Arthur Jarratt
Mr. Denis Rickett
Mr. Erwin Stein
Mr. Derek Young
ARTISTIC DIRECTORS: Mr. Benjamin Britten
Mr. Basil Coleman
Mr. Michael Northen
Mr. John Piper
Miss Anne Wood
GENERAL MANAGER: Mr. Basil Douglas
SECRETARY: Mr. Isador Caplan
REGISTERED OFFICE: 115 Chancery Lane, London, W.C.2.

1. DIRECTORS:

Mr. Isador Caplan, Mr. Anthony Gishford, and Lord Horder retire from the Board by rotation. All of them, being eligible, offer themselves for re-election.

Mr. Nicholas Sekers tendered his resignation on October 21st, 1955, and this was accepted with regret. The Chairman wrote to Mr. Sekers expressing the thanks of the Board for his services.

2. MEMBERSHIP:

The number of members of the Company remained at 23.

3. REPERTORY:

The Company has had an unusually active year.

"THE TURN OF THE SCREW" (Britten) was revived for performances abroad in Schwetzingen, Munich, Florence, Rotterdam, The Hague, Amsterdam, Arnhem, and Knokke; and at Aldeburgh, Llangollen (to open the International "isteddfod"), London during the autumn season at the Scala Theatre, and Cambridge. (21 performances)

"A DINNER ENGAGEMENT" (Berkeley) was revived for the London season for two performances, and with it was given "FAÇADE", the entertainment by Edith Sitwell and William Walton.

"LET'S MAKE AN OPERA!" was revived in a new production by

Peter Potter for the London season, and after a tour of Cambridge, Oxford, Bath, Norwich, and Birmingham, was given at the Royal Court Theatre, London, for a Christmas season ending on January 14th, 1956 - a total of 78 performances.

4. BROADCASTS AND TELEVISED PERFORMANCES:

"A Dinner Engagement" received two television performances. "The Turn of the Screw" was broadcast in Germany (twice), Italy, and Holland; and a studio performance was given for the B.B.C.

5. GRAMOPHONE RECORDINGS:

"The Turn of the Screw" was recorded by Decca in January. "The Little Sweep" (the opera in "Let's Make an Opera!") was recorded by Decca in October.

6. "THE TURN OF THE SCREW" TOUR ABROAD was extremely successful; both the work and the performances drew the warmest enthusiasm from audiences and critics.

7. SEASON AT THE SCALA THEATRE, LONDON (SEPTEMBER 20TH TO OCTOBER 1ST):

Although the attendances during the first week were somewhat disappointing, they improved steadily, and the net result (a loss of £444) was less than £50 above the estimate. The performances achieved a high standard.

8. TOUR OF "LET'S MAKE AN OPERA!"

In the provinces the audiences were rather disappointing, and only in Birmingham was there a profit. The net loss on the provincial tour was £400. At the Royal Court Theatre there was a profit of £105.

9. THE ENGLISH OPERA GROUP ASSOCIATION

The number of members rose from 500 to 560 during the year, mainly as a result of an intensive campaign during and after the Scala season. Except for covenanted subscriptions, which amounted to £221.10s.0d., and which were received direct by the Company, no donation was made to the Company during the year, as the funds accumulated by the Association were retained to

help finance the 1956 programme.

The Association again organised an enterprising schedule of activities.

10. ACCOUNTS:

(a) The Arts Council's annual grant remained at £4,000.

(b) The British Council guaranteed the tour abroad against loss up to £600, but the guarantee was not called upon.

(c) The total earnings - Arts Council grant, donations, covenanted subscriptions, etc. - amounted to £..... The total expenditure of £..... exceeded/was less than total income by £.....

(d) The total excess of income over expenditure since the incorporation of the Company is now £.....

(e) The total amount of the guarantees of the members of the Company is now £6910.

(f) The total amount of loans to the Company is now £300.

June 29th, 1956.

THE ENGLISH OPERA GROUP LTD.REPORT BY THE GENERAL MANAGER OF DISCUSSIONS WITH THE BALLET
RAMBERT

I was visited on May 4th by Mr. Bromwich and Mr. Ellis, respectively General Manager and Associate Artistic Director of the Ballet Rambert; their object was to discover whether the Group might be willing to discuss some scheme of co-operation, and whether such a scheme might be practicable.

They said that the Ballet Rambert are considering a radical change of policy, whereby they would revert to their original purpose, i.e. of presenting ballets in London of an experimental nature, and giving experience to young choreographers, dancers, designers, and composers. It is not their intention to abandon their provincial tours altogether, but in many respects they intend to adopt a policy with aims similar to our own.

We discussed the possibility of sharing in some way the lease of a theatre (e.g. The Embassy at Swiss Cottage, which is empty at the moment), until the money can be found to build a new theatre, for which they have already acquired a site at Notting Hill Gate. We made a tentative list of the resources which might be pooled, e.g. box-office and theatre staff, technical staff, and orchestra. (In this connection, it is encouraging to note that neither Mr. Bromwich nor Mr. Ellis thought an orchestra of twelve impossible; they were even prepared to commission composers to write for the Group orchestra.)

Despite the obvious snags, it seemed that the idea was well worth encouraging, and we agreed to meet again on May 31st and formulate, if possible, a proposal for discussion by our respective Boards. In the meantime I sounded the Artistic Directors and certain members of the Board, whose reactions were similar to my own.

Mr. Peter Pears and Mr. Harold Wallis came to the second meeting, and considerable progress was made. Our proposals may be summarised as follows:-

- (1) To form a new company, with representatives of the Group and the Ballet Rambert on the Board; with the object of presenting the productions of both companies as a joint venture.
- (2) To take a lease of the Embassy Theatre for an initial period of six months, starting in January 1957. (The Embassy is owned by Granada Theatres Ltd.; Mr. Sidney Bernstein, one of the latter's directors, told Mr. Bromwich that he likes the idea and would be willing to lease the theatre "at cost"; he would not reveal what precisely he meant by this, but it is possible that the figure might be in the region of £250 per week, inclusive of salaries of theatre staff.)
- (3) To present a repertory of operas and ballets, probably in the ratio of 8 weeks of opera to 18 weeks of ballet, possibly with each week of opera beginning on Thursday and ending on the following Wednesday. Each company would aim at two new productions at least in the course of the season.
- (4) To ask the Arts Council for a grant of £11,000 for the specific purpose of launching this venture. (N.B. It is not at the moment intended that the individual functions of the English Opera Group should cease. On the contrary, the Group would continue to accept suitable engagements in this country or abroad.)

In this connection we have been making out a rough estimate of the weekly income and expenditure (making allowance for production costs) on the following lines:-

1. Joint Expenses whichever company is playing:

	£
Theatre charges	250
Advertising and Publicity	60
Orchestra	250
Stage Staff	50
Wardrobe and Cleaning	10
Stage Expenses	10
Purchases in lieu of Hire	20
Repairs and Renewals	5
*Production Costs	250
Running Overheads (telephone, insurance, printing, photographs, audit, management expenses)	<u>20</u>
	<u>£925</u>

*It is estimated that the total joint production costs for the period will be about £6,500, of which £5,000 will be incurred by the Group and £1,500 by the Ballet Rambert.

2. Running Expenses (i.e. excluding items mentioned under Joint Expenses)

(a) Ballet Rambert	£490
(b) English Opera Group (singers, royalties, transport)	£750

3. Revenue from ticket sales:

Capacity per performance (tickets 4/- to 12/6)	£270
Capacity per week, say	£2,150

4. For six months' season, Ballet Rambert playing 18 weeks and English Opera Group playing 8 weeks, expenses would be:-

		£
English Opera Group: 8 weeks @ £750	=	6,000
Ballet Rambert: 18 " " £500	=	9,000
Joint Expenses: 26 " " £925	=	<u>24,050</u>
Total for 26 weeks		<u>39,050</u>

Average expenses per week = £1,500

Revenue @ 50% of capacity = £1,075

Loss per week = £425 or say £11,000 for the six months' season

It is interesting to note that Mr. Bromwich and Mr. Ellis are prepared to accept the fact that the operas will cost considerably more than the ballets (the production of an average Group opera appears to cost about three times as much as the average Rambert ballet).

It may be objected that the estimate of the Group's running costs seems to be rather low, and in this connection it is worth recording Mr. Britten's firm determination that the scheme should present the opportunity and necessity of building up a company of young artists - instrumentalists as well as singers - whose salaries will fit more reasonably into the economy of a venture such as this.

In assembling such a company the aim would be to concentrate on the excellence of ensemble rather than on the individual qualities of "stars". It is hoped that it would be possible to have the majority of the artists on contract for the whole period and, although guest performances would occasionally be inevitable and indeed desirable, most of the operas would be cast from the "permanent" company. In this way the Group would hope to retain its place in the musical life of the country on a more economic basis than has been possible hitherto.

The Artistic Directors realise that it will not be possible to give final approval as yet, with so many unknown factors to consider, but the Board will be asked whether they feel able to approve the scheme in principle.

THE ENGLISH OPERA GROUP LTD.

MEMORANDUM BY THE GENERAL MANAGER: CONCERTS AT THE ROYAL COURT
THEATRE, WINTER SEASON 1956/57

With the approval of the Artistic Directors, I have been discussing with the English Stage Company a scheme for presenting concerts at the Royal Court Theatre this winter, on the following lines:-

- (1) The proposed title of the series is to be (provisionally) "Artists of Fame and Promise".
- (2) It is proposed to present four or five pairs of concerts, for which double tickets will be sold, one for a Sunday evening, the other for the following Monday at lunchtime, the object being to secure an audience for the latter. The concerts would be given at intervals of not less than a month.
- (3) The aim of the series is to present chamber concerts of unusual interest with well-known artists, and also with young artists for whom such a concert may be their first chance.
- (4) Auditions to be held in the autumn with the object of discovering these young artists, the emphasis to be (although not exclusively) on singers and players who may be useful to the Group later on.
- (5) For the Sunday concerts we already have the following possibilities:-

October 7th : Britten (fortepiano) and the Amadeus Quartet. Mozart programme.

February 24th,
March 3rd or
24th : Recital by Pears and Britten

Other possibilities under discussion are:-

- (a) Melos Ensemble, to play the Schubert Octet and the Mozart Clarinet Quintet.
- (b) Goldberg, Pears, Malcolm, Weil. Bach programme.
- (c) Song recital with Jennifer Vyvyan and possibly one other singer.

(6) Financial Aspects:

Estimated revenue, calculated on the basis of 75% of the capacity audience for five pairs of concerts (tickets for each pair at 12/-, 9/-, and 6/-; single tickets for the lunch-time concerts also to be available at 2/6d.

£750

N.B. Capacity audience (450 seats) for each pair of concerts to yield £200.

Estimated expenses:-	£
Theatre charges	250
Printing, advertising, bill-posting, distribution	100
Pianos (hire and tuning)	100
Management	50
Artists' fees	<u>250</u>
	£750
	—

(7) Concessions to English Opera Group Association:

These concerts would also provide facilities for concessions to members of the English Opera Group Association; such concessions have proved a valuable incentive for prospective members and a useful means of maintaining interest.

June 29th, 1956.

THE ENGLISH OPERA GROUP LTD

PROPOSAL BY THE GENERAL MANAGER FOR A SEASON AT THE SCALA THEATRE, LONDON

September 26th-October 6th, 1956

The Artistic Directors make the following recommendations:-

- (1) That the booking of the Scala Theatre for eleven performances between September 26th and October 6th be confirmed.
- (2) That the following programme be given:-

September 26th, 28th, 29th	The Turn of the Screw (Britten)
October 1st, 3rd, 5th	
October 2nd, 4th, 6th	A Double Bill, consisting of:
	Venus and Adonis (Blow)
	Ruth (Berkeley) - world premiere
September 27th, October 6th (matinee)	A Triple Bill, consisting of:
	Venus and Adonis (Blow)
	Savitri (Holst)
	Facade (Sitwell-Walton)

The financial aspects of this programme are as follows:-

Expenditure

	£
Singers and Conductors	1,619
Orchestra	961
Understudies	200
Rent	440
Advertising	500
Hire	100
Theatre Staff	300
Stage Staff	350
Stage Expenses	100
Insurance	50
Royalties	100
Transport	40
Electricity	75
Printing	100
	<u>4,935</u>
Contingencies	<u>265</u>
	<u>£5,200</u>

Income

Sale of Tickets, calculated on a basis of 66 $\frac{2}{3}$ % of capacity (£525), with prices ranging from 15/- to 5/-

	£
11 performances @ £350	3,850
Revenue from advertisements in programmes	350
Grant from Elmgrant Trust	<u>400</u>
	<u>£4,600</u>
<u>Estimated Loss £600</u>	

THE ENGLISH OPERA GROUP

REPORT BY THE GENERAL MANAGER ON "THE TURN OF THE SCREW"
IN PARIS

The English Opera Group was invited to give two performances of Britten's "The Turn of the Screw" on May 22nd and 23rd, 1956, at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, under the auspices of the Paris Festival. The cast consisted of Jennifer Vyvyan, Arda Mandikian, Lotte Medak, Olive Dyer, David Hemmings, and Peter Pears, and the composer conducted.

It was our first appearance in France and we were all somewhat nervous, especially as the last Britten opera to be given in Paris had not been well received; and everyone had been warned how critical Parisians could be of British methods of stage production.

In the event, the reception by the audiences was remarkably warm. They listened very attentively from the start, and at the end there were numerous curtain-calls (fifteen after the first performance), and quite a lot of cheering. Comments were most appreciative - the general ensemble of the performance was highly praised, and the high quality of the individual singing and playing, the production and the décor. In this connection it is interesting to record that M. Jullien, a man of the theatre and Director of the Paris Festival, was delighted that we employed a fine painter for our décor - insufficient importance was attached to this point in England.

The press was mostly very favourable, and it was the general opinion that Britten had scored a double success as composer and conductor, and that the Group's performance had been a triumph. Discussions have already begun for a return visit next year.

One of the pleasant features of our visit was the co-operation of the festival and theatre staff, who were remarkably efficient and helpful - an indirect tribute to the opera, perhaps, but we don't find such enthusiasm everywhere.

The support of the Embassy and the British Council, too, was most valuable.

The following are some extracts from the press:-

Le Monde, May 24th

"L'interprétation es excellente, et l'orchestre, d'abord, sous la direction de l'auteur, a droit aux plus vive félicitations. J'ai déjà nommé le ténor, M. Peter Pears, chanteur accompli, plus en voix que jamais; Miss Jennifer Vyvyan, la gouvernante des enfants, tient ce rôle difficile avec une sûreté qui lui a valu un légitime succes. Les deux enfants, Miles et Flora - David Hemmings et Olive Dyer, - sont merveilleusement à l'aise dans leurs personnages et chantent avec goût, sans nulle gaucherie. Les rôles de Mrs. Grose, la femme de charge, et de Miss Jessel, le fantôme de l'ancienne gouvernante, sont bien tenus par Mrs. Lotte Medak et Mrs. Arda Mandikian.....

"Le public a fait un chaleureux accueil aux artistes de l'English Opera Group, les longues ovations qui les ont salués au baisser du rideau étaient méritées, tant pas leus grandes qualités individuelles que par l'homogeneite de la troupe."

France-Soir, May 24th

"Comme toutes les oeuvres lyriques de Britten, le 'Tour de vis' surprend à la fois par sa force, son inspiration et son étrangeté."

Le Temps, May 23rd

"La partition est d'une habileté consommée.....

"Les interprètes appartiennent au English Opéra Group, formation qui, depuis dix ans environ, mène une action efficace en faveur du théâtre lyrique britannique. Je voudrais nommer avant tout Peter Pears dont la voix, la musicalité et la diction m'ont semblé dignes de toutes les louanges et Jennifer Vyvyan, lumineux soprano qui a chanté et joué en grande artiste le rôle difficile de la gouvernante. Les deux enfants - David Hemmings et Olive Dyer - furent surtout des acteurs très sûrs.....

"A la fin, Britten a demandé trois fois à ses musiciens d'orchestre de se lever et de recevoir les remerciements du public en même temps que les autres interprètes. Ce fut justice.

Figaro, May 23rd

"Les interprètes sont si remarquables qu'on n'en peut imaginer d'autres. Je mets à part toutefois Peter Pears, dont le gossier a des agilités de muezzin. Rien de plus émouvant qu'à l'instant où la litanie qu'il dévide envoûte et ligote l'enfant en prière agenouillé dans sa chemise de nuit, l'enfant dont la voix menacée par la mue est à l'image de sa candeur salie par le péché.

"Si le 'Tour d'Ecrou' n'est pas, dans son genre, un chef-d'œuvre, je cherche en vain ce qu'il peut être."

Combat, May 24th

"Mais il possède un art du dialogue mélodique naturel, simple, direct et vif qui nous change agréablement du système de déclamation laborieux de trop de nos contemporains.

"Ici les dialogues se nouent et se dénouent avec une aisance tout à fait convaincante. Et il faut saluer l'habileté consommée du musicien dans l'art de tirer expression de quelques instruments subtilement choisis.....

"J'allais commettre une injustice grave en ne signalant pas l'astucieuse mise en scène liant vivement entre eux les tableaux par des changements à vue extrêmement rapides, mais surtout en ne signalant pas les décors en grisaille subtilement accordés à l'atmosphère et d'une fort grande beauté de John Piper."

L'Express, May 25th

"Musicalement, c'est une œuvre prodigieuse. Sa diversité rythmique, sa fantaisie sonore, sa richesse d'invention, son étouffante précision dans la définition des caractères et des situations, son lyrisme, son humour, sa puissance dramatique, le tout obtenu avec une économie de moyens stupéfiante - l'orchestre est composé de treize musiciens! - voilà autant des signes du chef d'œuvre. Nous ne croyons pas qu'il existe, depuis le 'Wozzeck' de Berg, œuvre lyrique plus envoûtante dans la production contemporaine.

"Il est vrai que c'est chanté et joué à la perfection. C'est l'English Opera Group qui promène l'œuvre depuis deux ans de par le monde, sous la direction de Britten lui-même. C'est là une entreprise unique en son genre: une sorte de 'centre lyrique' dont le travail communautaire est la règle, et dont le rayon d'action n'est pas seulement une province, une région, mais un continent. Chacun des instrumentistes qui composent l'orchestre est un soliste de grande classe; chaque chanteur est de première grandeur, et exactement fait pour son rôle.

"Il faut dire la perfection des éclairages de Michael Northen, qui jouent un rôle essentiel dans la création de l'atmosphère; la beauté suggestive des décors de John Piper; et les créations bouleversantes de Jennifer Vyvyan (la gouvernante) et du jeune David Hemmings (Miles), qui s'intègrent cependant sans la moindre effort dans l'ensemble constitué par l'admirable Peter Pears (Quint), Olive Dyer, Lotte Modak et Arda Mandikian. La troublante, la belle soirée!

Humanité, May 24th

"The English Opera Group entend ainsi prouver que l'art lyrique reste un art vivant, même si des conditions très difficiles le contraignent à borner ses ambitions et que c'est en définitive la qualité de l'oeuvre qui compte en premier lieu."

Paris Presse, May 24th

"La réussite de cette tentative, qui prenait les allures d'un défi, a été éclatante...."

"Dans un vocabulaire musical d'une hardiesse et d'une liberté prodigieuses, les personnages traduisent leurs émotions avec un pathétique bouleversant et l'orchestre, semblable au plan inférieur des cordes de la viole d'amour, vibre, par sympathie, dans un langage bref et elliptique de frissons, de sursauts, de gémissements, de soupirs complices...et ces touches rapides, par la vertu des timbres purs, ont un efficacité irrésistible...."

"En compagnie de leur heureux auteur, ils ont été chaleureusement applaudis."

Le Journal Musical Français

"Elle est faite d'éléments d'une nouveauté saisissante mais où rien n'est arbitraire et où tout est efficace et bouleversant. L'oeuvre est mise au point avec une minutie incroyable et la petite troupe qui la présente est composée d'artistes de la plus grande valeur. L'orchestre est composé de 13 solistes qui réalisent des effets sonores d'une rare ingéniosité. Britten ne nous avait jamais donné jusqu'ici une oeuvre aussi miraculeusement réussie. Cette création constitue une date dans l'histoire du théâtre lyrique contemporain."

Aurore, May 24th

"Mise en scène admirable, employant uniquement des jeux de lumière sur des rideaux transparents, et créant, par des moyens très ingénieux, une atmosphère saisissante."

France-Soir, May 24th

"Comme toutes les oeuvres lyriques de Britten, le 'Tour de vie' surprend à la fois par sa force, son inspiration et son étrangeté."

Temps de Paris, May 24th

"La partition est d'une habileté consommée....Souvent murmurante, chuchotante, la musique crée une atmosphère où le réel et l'irréel s'entremêlent inextricablement. L'orchestre est vivant, traversé d'appels mystérieux; les timbres des instruments sont utilisés avec un sens raffiné des valeurs sonores...."

Arts-Spectacles, May 30th-June 5th

"Outre ses mérites évidents, c'est, il faut bien le reconnaître, une oeuvre profondément originale."

Les Nouvelles Littéraires, May 31st

"'The Turn of the Screw' prend assurément place parmi les oeuvres les plus marquantes du répertoire lyrique contemporain."

DRAFT OF A LETTER TO THE ARTS COUNCIL, FOLLOWING DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THEM
AND THE GENERAL MANAGER, AND BETWEEN THE GENERAL MANAGER AND THE BALLET
RAMBERT

Dear John,

Co-operation with the Ballet Rambert

You will remember that on June 29th I circulated a report to our Board of discussions with Mr. Ellis and Mr. Bromwich, of the Ballet Rambert. These discussions have been continuing, and I understand that you are now willing to receive official notice of our proposals, so that you can consider how your Council may help us. If I may recapitulate our proposals, and amend them where necessary, they may be summarised as follows:-

- (1) To form a new company with representatives of the Group and the Ballet Rambert on the Board, with the object of presenting the productions of both companies as a joint venture.
- (2) To take a lease of the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, for a period of, say, four months, starting in October 1957.
- (3) To present a repertory of operas and ballets, probably in the ratio of one week of opera to two weeks of ballet, with each week of opera beginning on Thursday and ending on the following Wednesday. Each company would plan for at least one new production in the course of the season, and we would also hope to devise a new form of entertainment which would employ the resources of both companies.
- (4) To ask the Arts Council for a grant of £10,000 for the specific purpose of launching this venture. (N.B. It is not at the moment intended that the individual functions of the English Opera Group and the Ballet Rambert should cease; on the contrary, both companies would continue to accept suitable engagements in this country or abroad.)

In this connection we have been making a further estimate of the probable weekly income and expenditure (making allowance for production costs) on the following lines:-

(1) Joint Expenses whichever Company is Playing

Rent	£
Front of House Staff	60
Productions Manager	120
Stage Director	15
Stage Manager	15
6 Night Men	14
4 Day Men	24
Electricians (2)	45
Wardrobe Staff (3)	20
Lighting	26
Heat	60
Insurance	15
Advertising and Publicity	20
Orchestra	60
Wardrobe & Cleaning	250
Stage Expenses (maintenance)	10
Purchase in lieu of hire	10
Repairs and renewals (sundry)	20
Production costs	5
Running overheads	250
	<u>20</u>
	£1,059 per week

It is estimated that the total joint production costs for the period would be about £4,250 of which £3,000 might be incurred by the Group and £1,250 by the Ballet Rambert.

(2) Running Expenses

		£	
The English Opera Group	6 x £750	4,500	
The Ballet Rambert	11 x £500	5,500	
Joint Expenses	17 x £1,060	<u>18,000</u>	
		<u>£28,000</u>	
Average expenses per week		1,640	
Revenue, calculated on the basis of 50% of capacity (7 performances @ £150)		<u>1,050</u>	
Therefore the estimated weekly loss is		<u>£ 590</u>	or <u>£10,000 for 17 weeks</u>

NOTES

(1) Possible Savings:

- (a) Production Costs - scenery could be built and made in the theatre, and the theatre (or the Mercury Theatre) could be used for rehearsals.
- (b) We would hope to arrange extra matinées, e.g. for schools and at Christmas.

These might be offset by the necessity of rehearsing in the theatre prior to the opening.

(2) Mr. Ellis and Mr. Bromwich confirm that they are prepared to accept the fact that the operas will cost considerably more than the ballets.

(3) It may be objected that the estimate of the Group's running costs seems to be rather low, and in this connection it is worth recording Mr. Britten's firm determination that the scheme should present the opportunity of building up a company of young artists - instrumentalists as well as singers - whose salaries will fit more reasonably into the economy of a venture such as this.

(4) The Ballet Rambert is prepared to use the Group orchestra for their performances.

(5) In assembling such a company the aim would be to concentrate on the excellence of ensemble rather than on the individual qualities of "stars". It is hoped that it would be possible to have the majority of the artists on contract for the whole period, and, although guest performances would occasionally be inevitable and indeed desirable, most of the operas and ballets would be cast from the "permanent" company. In this way the Group on the one hand would hope to retain its place in the musical life of the country on a more economic basis than has been possible hitherto. The Ballet Rambert would be enabled to present its repertory in London with first-rate musical accompaniment, and to pursue its policy of commissioning new works; they would in addition engage suitable "stars" for specific performances, and with these "stars" and an improved repertory it could command better theatres on tour, and hope to increase its receipts.

I hope that the foregoing will be sufficient to assure you of the seriousness of our intentions in this scheme; if you now consider that the time has come to call a meeting between the representatives of your Council, the Ballet Rambert, and ourselves, we shall be happy to arrange it.

Yours sincerely,

Basil Douglas
General Manager

REPORT BY THE GENERAL MANAGER ON THE GROUP'S PLANS AT PRESENT UNDER
DISCUSSION (AS AT NOVEMBER 13TH, 1956)

- 1956 November 15th, 22nd, 29th, December 6th, 13th: Lunchtime Concerts at the Royal Court Theatre
- December 14th: B.B.C. Television. The Group is providing the players for a short opera by Malcolm Arnold, "The Open Window"
- December 16th: Peter Pears and the Purcell Singers at the Royal Court Theatre. "A Boy was Born", Folksongs, and Mediaeval Carols
- 1957 January 20th: Peter Pears and Benjamin Britten, at the Royal Court Theatre. "Die schöne Müllerin"
- February 10th: Dennis Brain Sextet at the Royal Court Theatre.
Programme - Divertimento (Mozart)
Piano Quintet in E flat (Mozart)
Piano Sextet (Poulenc)
Music by Faure, Milhaud, and ? Francaix
- February 27th, 28th: L'Oiseau Lyre recording of the Group's production of "SAVITRI"
- March 24th: Piano Recital by Badura Skoda at the Royal Court Theatre.
Programme - Sonatas by Mozart and Beethoven
Ravel: Gaspard de la nuit
Music by Takacs and Chopin
- April 8th - May 4th: Rehearsals for "Albert Herring" and "The Turn of the Screw"
- May 5th-10th: THEATRE DES NATIONS, PARIS
- May 12th-14th: BORDEAUX
- May 17th-June 1st: Tentative proposals for Monte Carlo and Italy
- June 1st-13th: Rehearsals for "Ruth" and new short opera
- June 14th-23rd: ALDEBURGH FESTIVAL
- June 24th-July 7th: Rehearsals and performances of "L'HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT" at York
- July 8th-13th: CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL
- August 7th-31st: Travel and performances at STRATFORD (ONTARIO)
- September-October: Tour of the U.S.A. (provisional plans):
September 2nd-7th : Stratford (Connecticut)
September 9th-14th : Phoenix Theatre, New York
September 16th-21st : Jamestown Festival
September 23rd-30th : Television production for N.B.C.
October 1st-15th : Universities

N.B. If the U.S.A. tour falls through, we have an offer from the Berlin Festival for the end of September

November 1957 - February 1958: The Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith
(collaboration with Ballet Rambert)

FINANCIAL ASPECTS OF THE FOREGOING PLANS

1. The English Opera Group Concerts: see Paper B
2. B.B.C. and recording engagements: the Group will receive a small management fee

3. Production Costs, 1957:-

	£	£
"The Turn of the Screw"	: Repairs to scenery and new gauzes	300
	Rehearsals of new cast	<u>200</u> 500
"Albert Herring"	: new production	4,000
"Ruth"	: revival for Aldeburgh	500
New one-act opera	:	500
"L'Histoire du Soldat"	: (The York Festival would pay)	-

N.B. For production costs to be incurred at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, see Paper C

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5,500

4. Overhead Costs

3,000

5. Foreign Tours:

It is intended that the continental engagements shall show a small profit, and that the American tour shall show a profit of at least £1,000

PRESS COMMENTS ON THE GROUP'S TENTH ANNIVERSARY

The national newspapers all took notice of the anniversary, and some of them wrote articles about the Group's achievements. (It was also remarked upon in the B.B.C.'s television programme "Panorama" in an interview with Peter Pears and Benjamin Britten.)

Eric Blom in The Observer said that "its tenth birthday is decidedly a matter of congratulation, to it and to all of us", and commented on "the team-work which distinguishes the Group. If the artists can be called stars, they are not planets, but a constellation, casting a mild light but a steady one, illuminating and reflecting each other. Yet there have been, and still are, some outstanding singers - or let us say, more appropriately, singing actors - whose names we know well and shall remember. The team-work, which shows acting to be as important as singing and playing, extends to scenic design, always devised with an eye to atmosphere as well as beauty."

Referring to "The Turn of the Screw", Desmond Shawe-Taylor in the New Statesman said, "This is a work of pure genius, perhaps the most perfect of Britten's more extended scores, and moreover an outstanding example of just such intimate collaboration between composer, librettist, designer, producer and performers as the Group exists to provide"; and in the News Chronicle Charles Reid said, "Both as a conception and as a concrete production "The Screw" alone would justify the English Opera Group's existence and earn an especially cordial welcome for their tenth anniversary season."

John Amis in The Scotsman remarked on "their important contribution to British opera"; Andrew Porter in The Financial Times said, "The English Opera Group can look back on their ten years of existence with pride.....The union of common sense and ambitious ideas made possible these performances which have provided so many rewarding artistic experiences, and permanently enriched the repertory"; and Edward Lockspeiser in The Tribune said, "In these days of obscure vested interests in music I whole-heartedly endorse the desirability of an independent operatic company whose main support are the people who make it and who want it."

Andrew Porter also said, in Opera, "The tenth anniversary season of the English Opera Group brought home to us forcibly how important a role it has played in the operatic renaissance of this country."

PRESS COMMENTS ON "RUTH" BY LENNOX BERKELEY

But if there is not much dramatic tension, there is plenty of beautiful music, especially in the duets and trios and the choruses, to make up for it. Berkeley always writes well for voices, even as he writes limpidly for the orchestra. And he was well served by the company, headed by Anna Pollak and Peter Pears, directed by Charles Mackerras. So the new work cast its spell upon one, the more potently as it is obviously inspired, like Tippett's "A Child of Our Time", by pity for the uprooted lives of to-day, of whom Ruth is the biblical prototype.

Dyneley Hussey
The Listener

Musically it clearly belongs among his finest and most important works, emphatically confirming his vocation as a vocal and choral composer and making a strong addition to his claims to a place among the first instead of the second three of his generation of English composers.

Colin Mason
The Listener

To the question, does it clothe the Biblical narrative with appropriate and beautiful music, give independent life to the characters concerned in it, and provide sufficient action so that the acting and stage-pictures can enhance the music? - to this multiple question we can safely answer yes. .

Andrew Porter
Opera

Naomi, Ruth and Boaz being insufficient to engage our whole interest for an hour or so, some choral ensembles have had to be inserted, and these are in the main the best things in the interesting score. The musical idiom is in general a curious alternation of new and old, the former being always the more impressive.

E.N.
The Sunday Times

The best of the opera, as I have suggested, lies in its first scene, throughout which the composer maintains a single lyrical impulse with admirable consistency of style, and without any hint of monotony. Here, as in the whole opera, he scores for his modest orchestra...with fine judgment and a delicate ear for texture; what is still more striking is his complete reliance on vocal melody to carry the weight of the emotion.

Desmond Shawe-Taylor
New Statesman & Nation

Nevertheless "Ruth" is a distinct advance on "Nelson", without convincing one that Berkeley's place is in the theatre; he just does not seem to have the right kind of imagination for it, nor the sustained inventiveness necessary to grip an audience and bring it back for a second and third visit. This is a pity because his music, at its best, has a freshness and ingenuous charm which is quite captivating.

Ceri Richards, working for the first time in the theatre, has devised an exciting and evocative backcloth and some effective costumes. Peter Potter's production employes the maximum of movement with the minimum of fussiness.

Berkeley is stremlly well served by his cast.

John Amis
The Scotsman

The English Opera Group has added a valuable short opera to its repertoire.

H.C.S.
Jewish Chronicle

"Ruth", despite its good moments, must be regarded as a failure, for it is so long for its content, that it becomes boring. If only the folk-like pastoral songs could have appeared in the second scene, and more dramatic action incorporated into the third, a more satisfactory formal balance would have been achieved.

Glasgow Herald

"Ruth" is, in fact, a most lovely little opera.....Mr. Berkeley has shown wonderful discretion in his handling of the English Opera Group's chamber orchestra.

J. F. Waterhouse
Birmingham Post

It is too good as opera to waste.

The Times

In choosing this story Berkeley has deliberately subjected himself to severe limitations on the dramatic plane, yet within their scope he achieves the modest aim he evidently set himself: to write an idyll with just enough incident in it to give the action (if that be the right word in this case) a gentle forward movement towards the central point - Ruth's betrothal to Boaz - and deck it out with a number of arias, solo ensembles and lively choral tableaux.

Time and Tide

Ceri Richards was the artist responsible for the outstandingly imaginative and colourful costumes and decor.

(This was typical of the extreme reactions aroused both for and against the designs.)

Donald Mitchell
The Musical Times