

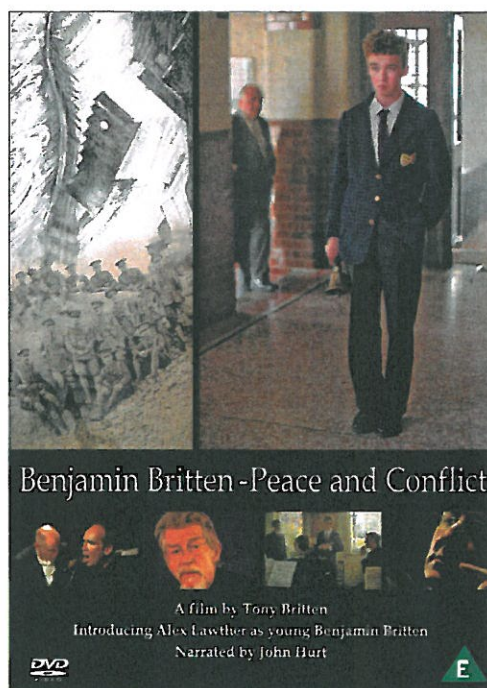
Benjamin Britten

centenary

by Nigel Simeone

Britten's pacificism

A moving and fascinating new film by Tony Britten (no relation) has arrived just in time for this survey of Britten centenary releases. 'Benjamin Britten – Peace and Conflict' was shot mostly at Gresham's School, Holt, and the film concentrates on the impact of his school years and his contemporaries there – many of them lost in the Second World War, as well as the spy Donald Maclean. The reconstructions, filmed on location, and documentary interviews are linked by a beautifully read narration by John Hurt



(who appears onscreen near the end). The interviewees include Joseph Horowitz, Raphael Wallfisch, Anita Lasker Wallfisch, Iain Burnside, Britten's agent Sue Phipps and Simon Kinder (Head of History at Gresham's). The music examples include works like *Russian Funeral* (as part of an absorbing discussion of Britten's Socialism in the 1930s) and many of these are played by musicians from Britten's old school, along with the likes of tenor James Gilchrist and the all-female Benyounes Quartet (playing the Second Quartet that was introduced by the all-female Zorian Quartet). Auden was also at Gresham's just before Britten – further evidence of the school's position as a cradle of left-leaning intellectualism. The young Britten is played by Alex Lawther: on this evidence he's an exceptional talent, and his portrayal is utterly credible. This is an engrossing film that deserves the widest circulation (Capriol Films DVD 5052442004530, 1 hour 45 minutes).