



Colchester Operatic Society

Welcome Pack

Updated November 2020

Colchester Operatic Society (COS)

Executive Committee Members 2020/21

** Officer*

Katie Cutmore	Chairperson *
Ann Taylor	Vice Chairperson
Sarah White	Business Manager *
Neil Somerville	Treasurer *
Amanda Powell	Secretary*
Celia Greaves	Assistant Secretary
Paul Kusel-Baum	Membership Secretary
Fiona Bocking	Cast Representative
Sally Cutchie	Marketing & Events Chairperson
Laura Hicks	Member
Becky Clemens	Member
Barbara Pears	Member
Claudia Haswell	Inclusion, Equality & Diversity Lead

Colchester Operatic Society 2nd Edition (CO2)

Committee Members 2020/21

Ann Taylor	Chairperson
Charlotte Butcher	Vice Chairperson
Sarah White	Business Manager
Neil Somerville	Treasurer
Diane Emberton	Secretary
Paul Kusel-Baum	Membership Secretary
Hazel Knights	Wardrobe Mistress
Kirsty Bryant	Props Manager
Charlotte Butcher	Youth Liaison Officer
Lorna Perrin	Member

Production Team

Each show that the Society puts on requires a number of people helping behind the scenes. Some of these people you will meet early on in the rehearsal process and others not until much closer to the show. The list below is not exhaustive but identifies some key people who you may see at rehearsals.

NB: The names are not completed for 2020/2021 yet as currently there are no productions happening due to the covid-19 pandemic

Name	Role
	Director
	Musical Director (MD)
	Assistant Director
	Choreographer (This is not always a separate role and is often undertaken by the Director or Assistant Director)
	Stage Manager (SM)
	Deputy Stage Manager (DSM)
	Props
	Wardrobe
	Lighting Designer
	Sound Designer
	Technical Manager at The Mercury
	Senior Technician at The Mercury

Welcome to Colchester Operatic Society

The Society is always seeking fresh talent in order to flourish and progress, and so we welcome you to our ranks. A copy of Society Rules can be found on our [website](#) for your information and retention.

The Society was formed in 1924 and from the beginning it was an enormous success. The first production was 'The Gondoliers', which was staged at the Hippodrome Theatre, Colchester (now a local nightclub) on 8th December 1925. Shows were performed annually until the Second World War interrupted proceedings. After a gap of seven years the Society lost no time in returning to productions with 'Beggars Opera' in 1946. The Society has become increasingly ambitious over the years, and in 1973 moved to the present performing venue – the Mercury Theatre with 499 seats in its auditorium. Shows we have performed in recent years include Sweeney Todd, Jesus Christ Superstar, Sweet Charity, Sound of Music, Sister Act, Jekyll & Hyde, Hairspray and Annie.

In 1984 COS Second Edition (CO2) was formed to mount shows of greater interest to younger members of the Society. Shows such as 'Grease', 'Footloose', 'West Side Story' and 'We Will Rock You' and more recently 'Legally Blonde', 'Little Shop of Horrors' and 'The Wizard of Oz' have been performed. Several members of CO2 have gone on to join the ranks of professional theatre.

1 General Information

Please visit our website (www.colchesteroperaticsociety.co.uk) as it contains useful information including past shows, reviews, rehearsal schedules, contact details, useful links, some of which are found within a Membership Only Area for which you will be given a unique username and password.

1.1 The AGM

The Society holds its Annual General Meeting (AGM) in June, during which the annual election of Officers and Members of the Executive Committee take place. Various reports on the running of the Society are presented, followed by an Open Forum, which gives an opportunity for members to present their views. You have to have paid your membership for the year (running from April to March) to attend the AGM.

1.2 Membership Subscription

Membership Subscriptions are due annually on April 1st. However, if you join partway through the year, the subscription becomes due immediately. You will not be allowed to audition if you have not paid your subscription.

Additional to your membership subscription, all those cast to take part in a show are required to pay a show fee. The required amount to be paid will be made known in the pre-audition literature as well as on the website.

2 The Show Life Cycle

Under the guidance of the Creative Team, but often led by the Musical Director (MD), pre-audition workshops are held. It is at this point that the material to be sung is revealed. Harmonies are taught (Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass). Time is set aside of solo numbers to be taught for those wishing to be considered for principal/lead roles. Dialogue is also available to be taken away and learnt.

All members wishing to take part in the show must do a chorus audition. Members will be allowed to audition for a maximum of two solo roles.

Once the cast has been selected and notified the official cast list will be published on the website.

Rehearsals commence with the Director and MD working together to build each scene with both dialogue and musical numbers.

During the early stages of rehearsals, a member of the costume team will take your measurements in preparation for ordering costumes. Props will be introduced in order to get cast familiar with using them.

Band call takes place on the Sunday before the show opens, prior to the technical and dress rehearsals.

The technical and dress rehearsals then take place, closely followed by the opening night.

A full production schedule (including rehearsals) is often available prior to the auditions or at the first full company rehearsal

2.1 Production Opportunities

There are many jobs behind the scenes for Members to be involved in. Speak to any member of the production team or a committee member if you are interested in bearing part of:

- Make-up Team
- Wardrobe
- Props
- Prompt

- Stage Management Team (Scene Shifting)
- Green Room (Back Stage Refreshments)
- Front of House (Programme Selling)

Note. Lighting and Sound production are handled by professionals. However, some assistance with both disciplines may be sought from within the membership from time to time.

2.2 Frequency of Productions

The Society currently presents two major productions a year at The Mercury Theatre, Colchester. The performance dates depend largely on negotiation with the management of The Mercury Theatre, but normally they fall in late January (COS) and September/October (CO2) each year.

In addition, a themed concert (COS) is usually performed once a year at various venues around Colchester and North Essex.

3 Rehearsals

COS hold rehearsals twice a week on Monday and Thursday evenings between 7:30pm & 10:00pm. The whole company is usually called both nights while the music is being studied with the MD. Once the show has been cast, the Director dictates who is required on rehearsal nights. There are some Sunday rehearsal too, where vital extra time is available to stitch together the rehearsed scenes into acts, and acts into whole show run-throughs.

CO2 hold rehearsals on Tuesday evenings between 7.30pm & 10.00pm with some Sunday rehearsals also.

It is very important that you attend all rehearsals on time. Before you commit to being in any show you will be asked to declare any planned absences you will have due to holidays etc. If these dates coincide with setting rehearsals it would be helpful for you to provide a 'stand-in' to take notes for you. If this is not done, it is possible you may not be included in certain scenes.

3.1 Rehearsal Schedule

The MD and Director will work with the production team to produce a rehearsal schedule of 'calls' (when you are required to attend). The schedule is usually available by the first pre-audition rehearsal along with a synopsis/plot of the show, character outlines and the audition parts for both chorus and principals.

Although the schedule is designed to map out the progress to show week, it can be subject to change. Any changes will be emailed and posted on the show's Facebook page. The schedule will also show the venue for each rehearsal. If you are unable to attend a rehearsal please inform the Membership Secretary, who will contact the Director and MD.

3.2 Musical Scores and Libretti

The Society will always provide Musical Scores and or Libretti (the words) for the show in production. These are available to members to hire at a small charge, which includes a returnable deposit when the book is safely returned (e.g. clean from any soft pencil marks that may have been made during rehearsals).

3.3 Music Rehearsals

Pre-audition music rehearsals are held with the MD. During these rehearsals, members will have to learn the music by heart. It is not necessary to be able to read music, although a basic understanding can be helpful. A small hand-held digital recorder or smart phone used to record sections of the rehearsal will be of huge help to you when learning your part.

At these rehearsals seating is set out by voice, i.e. Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass. Music rehearsals continue throughout the rehearsal period so that principals can learn their parts. These are important rehearsals, so do not be afraid to ask for help from the MD/rehearsal pianist.

3.4 Auditions

Anyone wanting to take part in a show must audition and be a member of the Society. Additional auditions are required for principal roles. Auditions are mandatory for chorus and principal roles. Principal audition pieces are announced at the pre-audition workshops comprising of passages of dialogue from the libretto and one or two of the musical numbers where appropriate. More information on our audition process can be found on our [website](#).

3.5 Floor and Setting Rehearsals

Once the show is cast and the music being learnt, the Director takes over. The Director will already have worked out entrances, exits, placement and bits of 'business' for everyone. You will find a small notebook and pencil invaluable to note down your moves and actions. Some 'revision' rehearsals will be under the control of the Director's Assistant (where appropriate), who is there to help you rehearse the Director's earlier instructions.

3.6 Rehearsal Dress and Personal Props

It is important that floor movement is practiced in outfits similar to those that will be used during show week. If you rehearse in jeans and trainers you might find it difficult to dance or fight in a long dress or robe, or hat, or to tap dance, so be advised by the Director as to suitable attire for floor rehearsals.

4 Preparation For The Show

Main costumes will be provided by the Society and your measurements will be taken by members of the costume team during rehearsals. You may be informed that there are items that you will probably need to provide in order to make the costume complete.

4.1 Personal Items

You will need to provide your own shoes. Ladies will need to provide tights, maybe some jewellery, when necessary. The Society usually hires wigs.

4.2 Calls Prior to Opening

There are some special calls that you need to attend as the first night of show week approaches.

4.2.1 Costume Call

Costume Call usually takes place early evening during the week prior to show week. The costumes are received, sorted by cast/character name. It is important that the cast try their costumes on to ensure they are a good fit, in good repair and appropriate for their character. The Director will often be in attendance in order to check that costumes meet their requirements. Between them, the Director and Wardrobe team will advise members on any extra personal items that may be needed to accessorise the costume e.g. braces, belts, socks, shoes, tights, jewellery, etc. After checking out with the costume team, cast members will be expected to take their costumes home with them and take them to their designated dressing room in the theatre prior to the Technical Rehearsal. Please note that in some cases (usually dependant on the time frame between Costume call and access to the theatre) the costumes will be labelled and taken to the theatre and hung in your designated dressing room.

4.2.2 Band Call

The Sunday prior to show week is used for Band Call. This will be the first and only opportunity for the MD to rehearse with the band/orchestra before show week, and therefore attendance is vital to the success of the show. The MD has a lot of work to complete in this short period to ensure the band parts are correct and the band understand the musical interpretation required. For obvious reasons this rehearsal is solely under the control of the MD. The company is required to attend for part of the day (specific times will be confirmed nearer the time) in order to know what it is like to perform with an orchestra, as it is very different to singing along with the rehearsal piano/keyboard. Please understand that this is not a movement rehearsal. The sound team attend, as it is an

important time for them and the Musical Director to understand the balance of sound between orchestra and singers.

Normally during the Band Call, the stage management team will be busy at the theatre getting the set in and lighting erected, so the Band Call is always at a different venue. You will be notified about the venue via email or on the show Facebook page if not stated on the rehearsal schedule.

4.2.3 Technical Rehearsal

The Technical Rehearsal takes place at the theatre, usually on the Monday before opening night. There is no orchestra for this rehearsal just the keyboard. This is a fully costumed hair and make-up run-through of the show and it's also the Stage Management Team's first rehearsal. It's their chance to get right the entire scene shifting, marking out, lighting, sound, props, announcements and special effects.

Costumes are worn in order to establish how they move and feel, plan any quick changes and identify any other issues.

Scenery (flats, trucks and furniture) can be heavy and cumbersome, so when the backstage crew say "get out of the way" it's usually to ensure your safety. Best practice is not to stand around backstage if you are not required to enter the stage. If you are backstage and not 'on stage' please do not talk.

The Technical Rehearsal can be a long affair, with many interruptions and repeats. It is therefore important that you concentrate and listen, as changes to setting details, entrances, exits may be necessary for logistic reasons.

4.2.4 Dress Rehearsal

The Full Dress Rehearsal is the next evening and is expected to run without interruption. The orchestra will be in attendance. It is usually at the dress rehearsal that photographs are taken for 'Front of House'. There will also be copies provided for purchase by members.

5 Performances

There are a few things to observe during the run of the show.

5.1. Parking and Security

There is NO PARKING AT THE MERCURY THEATRE. You are required to make your own arrangements for parking. Most people park in St Mary's car park and take the short walk over the footbridge.

Access to backstage is by electronic keypad. The security code for this will be disclosed to the cast on the first Monday and will remain unchanged for the run of the show, unless otherwise advised.

Everyone is required to sign in/out on the attendance sheets, to be advised, when you enter/leave the theatre. This list is important as it allows Stage Management to check that the cast is complete before curtain-up. It also allows the theatre management to check people off if there is a fire drill or any other emergency.

5.2 Dressing Rooms

All cast will be pre-allocated to the dressing rooms prior to the technical rehearsal. All female chorus members are usually together, female principals together, etc. Please remember that you will be sharing with a number of other people so try to be as considerate as possible to those around you. You are advised to leave your valuables at home. At the end of each performance you are expected to leave the dressing room clean and tidy, and completely cleared at the end of the run. Alcohol is not permitted in dressing rooms. This is Mercury Theatre policy.

5.3 Costumes

It is your responsibility to take care of the costumes which have been provided for you. The Wardrobe Team will be available for small alterations and repairs. Items such as shirts and gloves etc., which tend to become dirty during the show are your responsibility to take home and wash, and iron. Wardrobe will always advise you which items can be safely washed at home.

After the final performance and before you leave the theatre, you are required to put your costumes back on the hangers they came on and, along with any hats, shoes, etc that were associated with your costume, check them all back in with the wardrobe team. This is a necessary step to ensure all the costumes are complete and ready for return.

5.4 Make-up

You will need to provide your own stage make-up, with the exception of any specialist make-up that is role specific (e.g. full green face make-up for a witch). Ask for assistance/guidance if you need help. Remember - it is strictly forbidden to appear 'front of house' in either your stage make-up or costume.

5.5 Wigs

If you are required to wear a wig(s) during the show, this should be provided. It is your responsibility to take care of them so please observe the following wig care instructions:

- Handle your wig carefully and, if possible, use a wig stand/head to store it when not in use.
- Do not place your wig (or anything else) on the light bulbs around the mirrors - they will damage your wig when they are turned on!
- Do not brush your wig out of the style in which it is received - it has been 'dressed' in a certain way to represent the period of the show.
- Do not use electric rollers or hot brushes on your wig. You may use ordinary rollers or pins to keep ringlets etc. in reasonable condition.
- Only a quality hairspray may be used. PLEASE SEEK ADVICE PRIOR TO USE.

5.6 Stage Announcements

Throughout the show the Deputy Stage Manager (DSM) will make announcements via loudspeakers in the dressing rooms and other areas backstage to warn performers and backstage crew, calling the orchestra to the pit, giving a "time to curtain up" countdown, calling "beginners" to the stage, advising stage crew prior to the time when a scene change or entrance is becoming due. The backstage speaker system also relays the 'on stage' action. Whilst the performance is in progress, all participants should be alert to the show's progress and always ready for their next entrance. There is usually a CCTV feed in the Mercury Green Room, so it's fairly easy to track the action wherever one is backstage.

5.7 Off-Stage Discipline

Please remember that all that separates backstage from the audience is either a thin canvas structure or a curtain. Please try to be very quiet when standing in the wings and save your voice for when you are actually on stage. Be aware that if you can see the audience from where you are standing off-stage, then they can see you! One must also be aware of the temptation, when passing behind a back cloth, to touch it carelessly or allow your costume or the draught created by your passage to move it. Similarly, when making an entrance or exit through draperies or open tabs (curtains), try not to touch them as a small movement is visually amplified throughout the expanse of the fabric. Draperies and curtains can be easily moved, thus unintentionally unmasking the next scene and revealing that which is not intended!

5.8 Green Room

While the Society is in the theatre, the Marketing & Events Committee run a wonderful tuck shop of snacks, sweets, cakes, tea, coffee and non-alcoholic

soft drinks, all available to purchase throughout the rehearsals and the run of the show. Payment to be made at the time of purchase, no tabs.

5.9 Arriving On Time

Always give yourself plenty of time to get ready for the performance. Allow time for the unexpected, e.g transport issue and bad weather. Stage Management expect you to arrive and sign in at the theatre at least an hour before curtain up. If you have not signed in by then, they assume your non-arrival and have to make decisions on how to deal with your absence. You will be given a number to contact if you are running late near to the time we enter the theatre.

6 The Get-In and Get-Out

Being part of the show means that you will be asked to help at the **Get-In** and the **Get-Out**.

The **Get-In** starts when we have access to the theatre, normally on the Sunday before the show. During the get-in the set needs to be built, lighting rigged, flies flown. Basically, everything that is needed for the show needs to be taken into the theatre. Members of the cast are required to help.

The **Get-Out** is the reverse of the Get-In. At the end of the show everything needs to be taken down and tidied up. **Everyone** is expected to help with this. Jobs will be allocated during the show and will include jobs such as tidying dressing rooms, helping with costumes, helping on stage with the set.

Glossary and Technical Terminology

Key word	Definition
5 minute call (15 minute and half hour calls)	A backstage announcement is given 10 minutes (20 minutes and 35 minutes) prior to the show.
Beginners call	The beginners is given 5 minutes prior to the start of the show and act 2.
Curtain call	The bows at the end of the performance.
Down stage (DS)	The area of the stage closest to the audience.
Dress rehearsal (or Dress)	A full run of the show as if there is an audience, in full costume with orchestra.
Flats	A timber frame covered with a scenic canvas used to change the backdrop or to mask (hide) parts of the stage.
Flies	Cloths that are hung and flown (moved up and down) during the show.
Going dark (on stage)	When the lights are turned off.
Green room	A social space, often refreshments are available.
LX	Abbreviation of 'lighting'
Pit	Where the musicians of the orchestra play during the show.
Prompt	Someone who sits at the side of the stage during every show to prompt anyone who forgets their line.
Sitzprobe	Band call- when the cast and orchestra come together for the first time.
Sight Lines	In terms of being seen by the audience (when you want to and when you shouldn't be.
Stage Left (SL)	Left when you are stood on the stage looking at the audience.
Stage Right (SR)	Right when you are stood on the stage looking at the audience.
Tabs	Curtains
Treads	Stairs or steps
Tech rehearsal (or (Tech)	A rehearsal to run through the show in the theatre with all cast, staging, props, lights and sound (not necessarily costumes and or orchestra), to enable the stage crew to focus on how all these work with the cast and to solve an technical issues with the run of the show.
Trucks	The moving of scenery on and off stage on wheels
Up stage (US)	The area of the stage furthest away from the audience.
Wings	The entrances/exits to the side of the stage.