



# Here are some **Frequently Asked Questions** about Colchester Operatic Society.

## **How do I join COS?**

You can join COS by [contacting us](#) or our membership secretary on [cos1theatre@hotmail.com](mailto:cos1theatre@hotmail.com) or by filling out our on-line [membership enquiry form](#). There is no audition to join as a member but all members have to audition for any production they wish to be part of on stage. You need to be 16 years and over to become a member of COS, but we have a youth group, CO2, that accepts members aged 11-23 years old.

## **Is COS just for performers?**

No, our performing members rely on the many wonderful people who take part behind the scenes, such as stage crew, props, wardrobe & our committee members. These people are also members of our society who volunteer their time to manage the Society and to learn & practice technical theatre skills and support our Society's productions and its performing members. If getting involved behind the scenes interests you please get in touch by [contacting us](#).

## **What does it cost?**

Membership costs £10 per year (April 1st-March 31st) with a show fee in the region of £60, £30 for a concert or second show for performing members. The show fee can vary from one production to another; we ask cast members to pay a show fee to help towards the costs of hiring rehearsal spaces, costumes and various other costs involved with the production. Please speak to a member of the committee if you would like more information about show fees. Whilst we ask for show fees to be paid at the start of rehearsals for a show (once it has been cast) we are happy to discuss payment options, such as paying by instalments or by a delayed date, with individuals according to their needs.

## **What do I get for my membership?**

Most importantly, you get to be part of our Society. As a paid member you are able to audition (and perform in, if cast) for any of our productions that you are eligible for. If you are aged 11 – 23 years old you can take part in CO2 productions. If you are aged 16-23 years you can take part in both CO2 & COS productions. If you are over 23 years old you can take part in COS productions. Members also get quarterly newsletters, access to our COS members Facebook group and access to the member's area of this website. Our Marketing & Events committee also organise a variety of social events for our members. Paid members can attend our AGM and get involved in the management of the Society by becoming part of our Executive Committee and/or one of our sub-committees if they want to.



### **When do you rehearse?**

Colchester Operatic Society (COS) mainly rehearse on Monday and Thursday nights, as well as the occasional Sunday as required. CO2 mainly rehearse on a Tuesday.

### **Where do you rehearse?**

We have rehearsed at different venues within Colchester and the surrounding area but we do not have a set venue or base. Venues are organised according to availability and suitability for each production. Information on where we rehearse for a production will be advertised along with audition information. Venues we have rehearsed in include Montgomery Junior School, Prettygate Junior School, The Officers Club, St Teresa's Primary School, The Abbey Fields Centre, Headgate Studio, Langenhoe Primary School and Stanway Secondary school.

### **How often do you perform?**

COS normally perform one major show per year at [the Mercury Theatre](#) in Colchester, for a 2 week run, usually starting in the last week of January. We begin rehearsals and audition for this show in June/July each year, with a break in August, then rehearsals resume again in September. We also perform an annual concert in the spring/summer – rehearsals and Auditions for the concert begin in mid/late February. The concert itself is usually performed late May to late June, depending on the availability of venues. Our junior membership, CO2, usually perform one major show per year over two weeks in September, also at the [Mercury Theatre](#). See the Home Page for more details of current events. Throughout the year we are often requested to perform at various functions – carol singing, musical nights and fundraising events.

### **What are the show auditions like?**

Auditioning is quite simple, although as with any auditions, they can be a little scary or daunting but you are not alone in feeling like this; we all feel the same, even the seasoned COS members! The Society has a few music rehearsals prior to auditions and this is a great opportunity to familiarise yourself with the songs you may be required to sing at the audition. The director and the musical director will get together and set the audition pieces for you to perform at the audition. These pieces are usually extracted from the production and are better learnt if possible, giving you the best chance of impressing the audition panel. You can audition for more than one role, as well as audition for chorus, usually in groups of four. When you audition it will be in front of a panel of at least 5 people, including the musical director and the director. CO2 auditions are always like this (i.e. "closed" auditions), however for the main society, auditions are "open" to other paid-up members of COS to watch, unless they are going for the same role. More details on the audition process is available on request. Where possible, we will try to include the audition pieces for each show on our downloads page, although this is often restricted by rights holders – please check the downloads page for more information.



### **What if I want to suggest something, or even complain?**

The COS Executive Committee welcome any feedback, suggestions and even complaints from the Society members – you are more than welcome to let us know your thoughts and ideas about how we can improve the way that the Society runs. This can be done in person, by phone, by email or through this website. We ask that members refrain from contacting the committee through the open Facebook group. If you would like a direct response then you will need to include your name and contact details. If you would prefer to suggest something or complain anonymously then we have cast liaisons in place for both COS and CO2 who will be able to relay your message to the other committee members and let you know the outcome.

### **What do you expect from the cast?**

Although the Society is run to entertain both the public and its members, we do expect a certain level of commitment and dedication from our cast and crew, and not just on stage. Directors expect the cast to attend all schedule rehearsals or let them know well in advance if you can't make it (you will be given contact details in this instance). If you can't make a rehearsal it is expected that you provide a stand in who can take notes for you and allow the rest of the cast to practice as if you were there. Obviously we don't expect you to make it to rehearsals if you are ill, although we ask that you notify someone. We operate a 'three strikes' rule for non-attendance. Any cast member who has three 'unexplained absences' – i.e. does not tell anyone they will be missing a rehearsal or 'unacceptable absences' – i.e. doesn't provide a reasonable explanation and fails to provide a stand in if asked to – will be asked to leave the production, no matter the size of their role.

### **Do you have Facebook groups?**

Yes, we do have closed Facebook groups for individual shows or productions monitored by the directors, webmaster and Executive Committee. We also have a closed group for our [COS members](#), not specifically linked to a production. CO2 Show Facebook pages are only open to the cast and selected adults involved with the shows and content is monitored by Essex registered chaperones. There is a general [COS open/public group](#) providing a good way to keep in contact and chat with other members, past and present, and individuals who support our Society, and an easy way to reach members of previous shows who, for example, may want to come along to a social event but haven't heard about it yet. This, and any other open groups or events that individuals may set up, are not monitored by the Executive Committee and therefore they do not express the views of the committee as a whole, and whilst the Executive Committee welcome contributions in this format we ask all members to carefully consider any posts they make to this group, as they will be seen by the public. NB-when you click the link for these groups you will need to log into your Facebook account to access it. We have a Facebook page, monitored by our webmaster and Executive Committee, which you can visit at <https://www.facebook.com/colchesteroperaticsociety/>.



### **Can I find you on Twitter or Instagram?**

Yes you can follow us on twitter [@ColchesterOpSoc](#) and on Instagram [@colchesteroperatic](#)

### **What if I'm nervous about being a new member and joining such an established group?**

We understand how daunting it can be joining an established group and being new. All of us were new at some point. You will likely meet our membership secretary first when you arrive to go through administration and make introductions. It takes time to get to know everyone but the rehearsal and show experience is a great way to get to know new people and bond through the shared experience. However, please let us know when you contact us, if you are worried at all, as members of our committees are more than happy to ensure you are personally met when you arrive at your first rehearsal and guided through the experience, as well as introduced to others.