



Charity No. 1198865

Colchester Operatic Society Concert Director/Producer Role Description

Created August 2022

A Director for a Society concert usually acts as a producer as well as director, working alongside the Executive Committee. They would also choreograph any movement, though can engage another person to perform this role as their assistant if preferred. It is an unpaid role usually undertaken by a member of the Society (including members of the Executive Committee) for experience and the opportunity to learn and develop directing, producing and creative skills. Any assistants/choreographers are also unpaid. They would work alongside a paid musical director (MD) and can be included in discussions about which MD to appoint, if deemed appropriate by the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee invite members to pitch their creative ideas for a concert before selecting and appointing someone in the role. A pitch involves describing your concept and ideas for a concert, potentially including your theme, title, any artwork designs you may have, song ideas/choices, staging/costume ideas and anything else relevant you wish the Committee to consider. You do not have to have prior experience, but you may wish to detail any experience you do have for the Committee to consider.

Things to be aware of/bear in mind when creating and developing your concert programme

Licencing rules

Licences for performing songs in concerts are to be covered by the Performing Rights Society (PRS) licence held by the venue – this may exclude some songs, though it may be possible to contact specific companies that own rights to the songs (e.g. this was done in 2019 for *The Greatest Showman* songs) – to be discussed and arranged with the Society business manager in advance.

It is normally permissible to perform excerpts from musical plays with a licence from the Performing Rights Society (PRS) provided that:

- You may not perform more than 25 minutes of songs from any one show.
- You may not wear the costumes associated with the show.
- You must perform the whole or most of the concert on a fixed set, which is not the set appropriate to the show(s).
- Scenic effects must be limited to the use of either a single prop and/or a backcloth or a piece of scenery, or lighting effects, that are not based on the work from which the songs are taken.



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Appropriate content

Concerts are a good opportunity to combine different genres of songs but please be mindful of the content and language of songs chosen. If some songs contain adult language or themes, we will need to warn audiences and put an age rating on our concert. As a Society, we would prefer our concerts to be family friendly where possible and appropriate. Please ensure songs chosen are appropriate for the cast to perform, considering their ages, gender, any disabilities, race and ethnicity sensitively and appropriately. There are times when it would be suitable and encouraged to break stereotypes in casting and performing but also times where it is necessary to tread carefully and with sensitivity to marginalised communities. Please speak to our inclusion lead or a member of the Executive Committee if you are in any doubt about any of your chosen content. Any content produced under the Society's name should reflect the aims of the Society; to promote and improve general education in relation to all aspects of the art of drama and musical theatrical performance for the public benefit; and uphold our commitment to proceed as an inclusive, diverse and accessible organisation.

Inclusion

Please bear in mind the varying abilities of our membership and create a programme/concept that can be reasonably adapted to ensure those members who wish to participate can be enabled to do so where appropriate and possible. Concerts are an ideal time for our members to be able to sing and perform in songs they wouldn't always get the chance to in our main shows, where appropriate and possible. We have members who would love the opportunity to dance but others who would prefer to participate in minimal movement and/or simple choreography. Please bear this in mind as you design and develop your concert programme.

Flexibility

Please be ready to adapt your concert programme as you cast the show/once the show is cast. Who you have in your cast will determine what songs are possible or not and where possible, please ensure as many members can get their chance to shine with solo lines/songs/small group numbers. However, our Society's strength has always be in our chorus numbers and harmonies, so please make sure there is enough of these included in the programme too. It may be that the Executive Committee request some changes to your programme upon selecting your pitch, bearing in mind all the above points. You may also find adaptations need to be made when you start working with the appointed MD, who will have musical skills and knowledge that can help develop your concept/programme and the Executive Committee would ask that they can give some creative input into your concert.



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Working together with the Committee and the MD is an important part of the role of concert director.

Title and artwork

Usually, the title of your concept would be included in your initial pitch. You may also have artwork ready for the pitch but this is not expected and can be developed once you are appointed as director.

When you have your concept and title, you will need to create artwork to accompany this and to be used in promotional materials. If you are not able to produce this yourself or do not have a contact able to do this for you, this can be done in liaison with our Marketing and Events team and/or the Executive Committee, who can help find someone to develop the artwork for your vision. You will still need to provide key ideas for what you want the artwork to contain and portray. The artwork will need to contain the concert title, the Society name and the dates and venue of the concert also.

You will also need to provide a synopsis/promotional blurb for your concert to use in the brochure for the venue and on marketing materials. Again, this can be done in liaison with the Marketing and Events Committee, who can support if needed.

Appointing an Assistant/Choreographer

If you have someone in mind to support you with your concert, please inform the Committee who this is in advance. The Executive Committee reserve the right to guide you in the appointment of an assistant and will make it known to you if there is good reason that someone you request would not be suitable for appointment.

Information for those appointed as director

Once you have been appointed as concert director you can begin work on developing your concert (as discussed above), and you will be expected to liaise with the Executive Committee as you work together to put the following things in place. The following list is not exhaustive and please be aware items listed are not all your responsibility, but you may be asked your input in deciding them. **Red font items** are your responsibility to ensure are in place/to do:

- MD appointed – they will be responsible for providing any additional musicians but you may wish to liaise with them as to what musicians you require for your concept.
- Date of concert agreed
- Venue Booked



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- **Rehearsal schedule dates agreed** and venue(s) booked – the important part of this for you as the director is your availability for the schedule and to liaise with your MD, looking at your proposed programme, to ensure there is enough rehearsal time prior to the show week to ensure you can produce a great concert. **Create a provisional schedule with dates ready for auditionees.**
- **Concert running order/song list to be confirmed between director and MD, including which songs are for chorus/groups/solos. This can be shared with potential auditionees as you deem appropriate (or if not 100% decided prior to auditions, highlights can be shared). Usually, each half will run about 45 minutes long – if one half needs to be longer, this is usually the first half.**
- MD to source music – provide these to membership secretary to be able to share copies with cast digitally (and printed if requested, usually at a charge once the show has been cast). Some material may need to be available for pre-audition rehearsals.
- **Audition date and pre-audition rehearsals scheduled** and venue(s) booked– you will be required on the audition panel along with the MD, any assistant you may have appointed, and another member of the Executive Committee as deemed appropriate. Auditionees are usually asked to perform their choice of song for concert auditions but if you would prefer a set audition piece, this can be decided between director/MD ahead of auditions and clearly made known to auditionees. Audition forms will be organised by the Committee but make sure you let auditionees know they must pay membership and complete a form to include any known absences from the provisional schedule.
- **Artwork to be shared with Marketing and Events team** to advertise auditions and the concert
- Casting – following auditions, you will need to **produce a list of who is cast in each song to be shared** with those who auditioned and on the Society website (send this to the designated members of the Executive Committee responsible for disseminating the information – usually membership secretary, chair and webmaster).
- A Facebook group will be created for the concert and the concert director will be made administrator, so information can quickly be disseminated to cast.
- **Detailed rehearsal schedules with what is being rehearsed, when and who is called to be created and then shared with cast. It would usually start with music rehearsals before moving to setting rehearsals – liaise with the MD about how much time you will need for each aspect and songs. Be prepared that things can take longer than you expect and make time for lots of revision calls later also. Build in time to run through each act and a whole show run towards the end of the schedule.**



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- Risk assessments to be completed – director to make known any specific risks arising from their concert programme/plans/choreography to the Exec member completing the risk assessment
- Registers to be at all rehearsals – **mark known/reported absences on these** so the Exec Committee can monitor. This will be done in conjunction with the secretary/membership secretary who should be the first point of contact for absences. **Please tell cast members to contact them directly if they contact you with absences personally and remind them to sign in and out at rehearsals.**
- Show fees to be collected by membership secretary – you may need to remind cast to pay this when leading rehearsals (in liaison with the membership secretary)
- Cast rep to be appointed at start of rehearsal period. They are point of contact between cast and Executive Committee and potentially a point go contact for you and cast also.
- **Create a concert running order for all cast**
- **You will be responsible for running/leading rehearsals in partnership with the MD**
- Music parts to be taught to cast by the MD – you do not need to be present at all music calls but we would suggest that you are where possible, as questions may arise and changes may be made that are relevant to any setting you are planning/have planned. It also makes working together with the MD easier and you can present a united front/team to your cast.
- **Setting – this is your time to shine! We would suggest lots of planning ahead is done for setting numbers to make the best use of time at rehearsal. It is often useful to be able to share any diagrams/plans/notes you have with the cast afterwards also to help them learn what they are being asked to do. You will need the MD to be present to play when running through setting and this gives them a chance to pick up on any musical errors cast are making during this time also. Where possible, plan ahead for the venue you will be performing at and build in entrances and exits within your setting – this will make it easier once you are in the venue itself.**
- **Costumes list – whilst we don't usually have costumes for concerts, cast are often asked to wear specific colours/items of clothing to fit with a director's theme/concept. Make a clear list of any required outfits for the cast as early as possible in the rehearsal schedule to allow them time to source. It may be useful to ask cast to bring in any outfits to rehearsals ahead of getting to the venue to ensure they are suitable. Don't forget to give clear direction around footwear also, and any hair and make-up.**
- Band call – the MD may choose to ask any musicians/band members to attend a rehearsal ahead of being in theatre OR they may have the band call once at the



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theatre. For concerts, the band would usually be at the tech and dress rehearsals to enable maximum rehearsal time.

- It is useful to ask someone to come and take photos of rehearsals and the dress or tech run for publicity and cast purposes – liaise with Marketing and Events team if you don't have someone able to do so.
- You may need to liaise with the venue during the show run week, as the main point of contact physically there but please seek help from the Executive Committee as and when necessary.
- Help promote the concert throughout the rehearsal and show period – working with the Marketing and Events Committee on publicity ideas.

Budget

There is no real set budget for additional items (props/costume/set) for a concert, but if you require some key props/costumes/set dressing pieces this should be done in liaison with the Committee before making any purchases. We have a large collection of items in the Society store that you will be able to make use of also. You can ask cast to provide small costume items themselves. If you borrow things from the store you will need to organise collecting and returning these. Any items you choose to use or provide for the concert run will need taking to the theatre and then collecting and returning to where they belong during get out. Please keep a list of what is used and where it needs to be returned to, plus ensure all arrangements for this are in place before going into the theatre.

Programmes

Directors have traditionally either designed/created the programmes themselves or found someone to do so, which can be done in liaison with the Executive Committee or Marketing and Events Committee. Directors would usually need to provide a bio for themselves, and a welcoming message to the programme and/or description of the concert concept itself, at very least. The Marketing and Events team organise programme printing and the price to charge will depend on the cost of printing. The programme is usually A5 size and only a few pages long, costing between £1.50-£2 for audience members.

Depending on the venue, we may need to provide a float for selling the programmes (this is the case for concerts at the Headgate). Please liaise with the Marketing and Events Team ahead of the show run to ensure this is organised. Example programmes from past concerts can be found on our website here:

<https://colchesteroperaticsociety.co.uk/programmes/cos-past-show-programmes/>



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Technical Crew

What technical help/crew you need for your concert will depend on what your concept involves and the venue. These crew members would be volunteers. You would usually need someone to design/operate lights. If using the Headgate Theatre, you may want to make use of their projector and have someone appointed to manage this. If you have any voiceovers/sound effects, you will need someone to operate these. Depending what you set, you may need someone to move blocks/props on/off stage or open/close curtains. However, it is useful to have at least one person backstage as your stage manager and you can make use of cast for doing some of the moving on/off stage tasks. Please speak with the Executive Committee to organise appointing these people but if you know of anyone you wish to work with, then please make contact and introduce them to us. You may choose to help with some of these tasks yourself during the show run but please be aware you will need to be out front on tech/dress to oversee the running of the concert and you may wish to watch a performance yourself too, so organising a rota would be important in these instances.

Get In

You will need to be there for get in to oversee those working for you to make your vision come to life. There is often the opportunity to organise an extra rehearsal or band call on get in day (depending on venue used and timings of the day). You will need to organise which cast are going to be in which dressing room at the venue and ensure there is enough space for this to work practically. Please provide any lists for dressing rooms and some running orders to put up backstage for cast/crew also.

Technical Rehearsal

You will need to ensure all departments are clear on what you expect from them/what their instructions are. Explain to cast that this rehearsal is often longer than usual with stops/starts and is more for the technical teams to get the lighting and cues correct. It is useful for cast to wear costumes and practice costume changes/using props during this rehearsal though. You will be in charge of running this rehearsal and asking people to stop when necessary. You will need to liaise with your technical crew throughout and ensure everything is happening safely in the space available. Tweaks to setting and entrances/exits will likely be made during this rehearsal. You will need to make notes to pass on to all involved afterwards to improve things ready for the dress rehearsal.



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Dress Rehearsal

This should run from start to finish with minimal stopping (unless health and safety requires it to). Sit in the auditorium to watch and make notes as it runs to feedback to those involved afterwards to perfect your concert production.

Show Run

Your job is now done unless you are choosing to support backstage. We recommend positive encouragement and communication to your cast before opening night.

Get Out/Post Show

Please organise a list of get out jobs ready to put up backstage/share with cast and crew for get out. Make it clear to cast that they are expected to help in this vital part of the show process. You need to ensure everyone is clear what to do, where things need to be returned to etc. Ideally you would be present to help with this. The cast rep will usually organise an after-show party but you may wish to be involved in this or organise social events to celebrate the success of your concert afterwards – this is completely your choice.

Useful Tips:

- Share your vision with those you work with including the cast from the start so they buy in to what you are trying to create.
- Be organised and prepared.
- Make detailed notes of what you have set to refer to if asked questions by cast later or there is any disagreement about what was set (your word should be final on this)
- You can make use of videoing any setting as long as cast have all given permission to be videoed and for this to be shared on social media (via **closed** Facebook group)
- Be patient and calm where possible.
- Give clear instructions and plenty of opportunity for cast to repeat/revise anything learnt.
- Be prepared to adapt your original plans if things are not working or cast are finding them too difficult (or not challenging enough!).
- Have good communication with those you are working with including the cast.
- Positive feedback and encouragement to cast goes a long way.
- If in doubt, ask for help as there is usually someone who knows the answer.



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Key contacts

Chair – chair@colchesteroperaticsociety.co.uk

Secretary - secretary@colchesteroperaticsociety.co.uk

Inclusion Lead - inclusion@colchesteroperaticsociety.co.uk