



Registered Charity No. 1198865

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

How do I join COS?

You can join COS by [contacting us via our website's form](#) or our Secretary on secretary@colchesteroperaticsociety.co.uk. 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 £85 for a main show and £35 for a concert for performing members in the cast. 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. In line with our Inclusion, Equality and Diversity Strategy, we want to improve access to our productions for cast members from a diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds and now have a show fee bursary available for members to apply for, to enable those with low or no income, who can't afford to pay their show fee, to participate in our productions. You can apply for the show fee bursary [here](#).

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 only take part in COS productions. Members also get quarterly newsletters, access to our COS members-only 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



Registered Charity No. 1198865

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 (7:30-10:30pm), as well as some Sundays (10am-4pm). CO2 normally rehearse on Tuesday evenings and some Sundays. We do not usually rehearse in school holidays.

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 at in recent years include Philip Morant School, St Teresa's Primary School, Theatricool Studio, Langenhoe Primary School, Stanway Secondary school, Colchester Royal Grammar School, and the Mercury Theatre.

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 audition for this show in June/July each year then begin rehearsals 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 youth group, CO2, usually perform one major show per year over two weeks in September/October, also at the Mercury Theatre. See the Home Page for more details of current events. We also partake in other events throughout the year, recently including carol singing in December, and performing at Colchester Pride in August.

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 pre-audition workshops prior to auditions and this is a great opportunity to familiarise yourself with the songs and scenes you may be required to perform at the audition. The director and the musical director will set the audition pieces for you to perform at the audition. These pieces are usually taken from the show you are auditioning for. You can audition for up to two principal roles, 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 COS, whilst auditions are now "closed", the committee and production team for a specific production may decide to hold "open" auditions instead, which means all auditionees and paid-up members of COS can watch, unless they are going for the same role. More details on the audition process are available in our audition processes document (on our [policies](#) and [join us](#) page).



Registered Charity No. 1198865

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 representatives (who act as liaisons between cast and committee) 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 the Society's Secretary know well in advance if you can't make it or are going to be late (by emailing secretary@colchesteroperaticsociety.co.uk). 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 us in advance. We operate a 'three strikes' rule for non-attendance. Any cast member who has three 'unauthorised absences' – i.e. does not inform us as detailed above that 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 – may be asked to leave the production, no matter the size of their role. More details can be found in our Cast Code of Conduct (on our [policies page](#)).

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 current members, not specifically linked to a production. CO2 Show Facebook pages are only open to the cast and crew of the shows. 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. For more information please see our social media policy on our [policies](#) page. NB-when you click a 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 social media?

Yes, you can find links to our Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn and YouTube [here](#).

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 one of our committee members 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.

Updated June 2023.