

# COLCHESTER OPERATIC SOCIETY

Registered Charity No. 1198865

## The COS and CO2 Audition Process

(Revised September 2023)

The Colchester Operatic Society (COS) and its youth group The Colchester Operatic Society Second Edition (CO2) (who are collectively referred to as “The Society”) normally presents two major productions and a concert in any one year. To take part in any of these shows you will need to go through an audition process. There are subtle differences between the auditions held for COS and CO2 shows and concerts. This document sets out the Audition Process for all the audition types and associated selection process.

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## **The COS Audition Process**

### **1. Prior to COS Main Show Auditions**

It should be noted that only fully paid up members will be allowed to audition for COS productions. All auditionees will be required to do a chorus/ensemble audition for every show, even if they are auditioning for a lead/named part only.

Membership is for one year and runs from 1<sup>st</sup> April – 31<sup>st</sup> March.

Members will be given an approximate number of cast members that the production team are looking for. We offer pre-audition rehearsals that are open to all. Information on the show we are casting, parts we are looking to cast, details of audition dates, times and any specific requirements will be posted on the COS website. Where possible audition material and information will be shared electronically in advance of the pre-audition rehearsals (and always in advance of auditions) to paid members.

### **1.1 Audition Pieces**

With a show having been chosen and a Production Director and Musical Director appointed, the Executive Committee will request the Production Team to submit their list of audition pieces for the main (named) characters, and those of the chorus. The audition pieces will be chosen to be representative of the whole character to be portrayed and will not be over-long. The combined list of dramatic and musical pieces together with Plot and Character Outline will be made available to members in electronic form in advance of or following the pre-audition rehearsals (and always in advance of auditions). Physical copies of the libretto passages and audition music will be made available to potential auditionees on request.

Whole scores and librettos are normally hired by the Society for the run of each production, a fee will be charged to each member for the hire of this material during the rehearsal/show period. At the end of the show when the scores/librettos are returned in a clean condition (all pencil marks removed), then an agreed percentage of the fee is refundable.

## **1.2 Show Fees**

A Show Fee will be required from every performer in the production, payable prior to or at the first company rehearsal. The fee is only refundable in the event that the member subsequently withdraws from the production within ONE MONTH of the audition or at the Executive Committee's discretion in exceptional circumstances.

## **1.3 Audition Application**

Members wishing to apply to audition for a production should ask the Secretary for an audition form. These will be sent electronically via google forms – a hard copy or assistance completing the form can be organised by request.

Auditionees will need to state any holiday dates or involvement in other productions that might affect their rehearsal attendance on their audition form. A provisional rehearsal schedule will be made available to assist with this. This will help the production team to reorganise the rehearsal schedule if required.

Forms must be completed and submitted in advance of the Audition Day and by the stipulated deadline for the production you are auditioning for.

It is an obligation of every performing member that they enter into each production on the understanding that they will take part in EVERY performance during the run of the show, including Technical and Dress rehearsals and assist with the 'get-in' and the 'get-out' of the theatre. We also expect a high

level of attendance throughout the rehearsal process for anyone cast in the show.

## **1.4 Cast Selection Process**

The cast for any production will be selected by the Audition Panel appointed by the Executive Committee and comprising of at least 5 members: The Production Director, Musical Director plus, if part of the production team, Assistant to the Director/Choreographer, and at least 2 further members appointed by the Executive Committee, one of which will Chair the panel (this is usually the COS Chair) and one of which is independent of the Executive Committee and Production Team. It is the duty of the Audition Panel to assemble the best possible cast for the production. This casting is predominantly based on audition performance and suitability for available roles but previous attendance, time keeping, effective communication of absences or lateness, attitude, rehearsal and show performance both on stage and backstage may have a bearing on casting, as this information may be shared with audition panels for their consideration (as detailed in our privacy policy and cast code of conduct).

The Audition Panel reserves the right to foreshorten any audition, named part or chorus, on the grounds that they have seen enough to be able to make a decision, or if time constraints dictate.

It should be noted that the COS Chair is on the panel to ensure the auditions and deliberations are free, fair and without bias or favour. If the Chair is unable to be part of the panel, they will

appoint another member of the Exec Committee to chair the panel on their behalf.

## **1.5 Membership Observer**

The Membership will be given the opportunity to appoint a Society member to observe, but not to take part in the deliberations of the Auditioning Panel. The Observer is required to produce a report for the Executive Committee on the conduct and actions of the Auditioning Panel. This report will be made available to the membership and will be downloadable from the Membership Area of the website.

## **1.6 The Auditions**

COS have traditionally held open auditions but following the pandemic and a membership vote, these have moved to **closed** auditions. This means members only audition in front of the panel and any reader(s) (and/or a handful of other members in their audition group for ensemble auditions). The Executive Committee are aware that some members prefer open auditions; which means that, unless auditioning for the particular part being selected, all paid up COS members are at liberty to watch the auditions; and some members prefer closed auditions. The Executive Committee reserve the right to change the auditions to open auditions for a particular show in liaison with the show's Production Team and/or the membership as deemed appropriate. Everyone will be informed of any change from closed to open auditions in advance of the affected auditions.

If an audition is open, it is required as a matter of courtesy to the Audition Panel and auditionees that the viewing membership does so in silence and without applause or other unnecessary distractions of any sort. Any members auditioning for a named part will be asked to leave the space during any other auditions for the same part.

Only fully paid up members will be allowed to audition (or view the auditions in the case of open auditions).

A running order for the Auditions will be available on the day but please ensure you are available to attend for the full day/times set as we cannot always guarantee specific timings and even if timeslots are given, these can sometimes overrun.

If applicants find it impossible to attend on Audition Day, at the discretion of the Executive Committee, arrangements might be made for such members to send in video auditions in advance (by a set date/time) to be viewed by the panel on audition day (following all auditions for those in attendance) to be included in their deliberations. Members taking up this opportunity need to arrange recording themselves completing the set auditions pieces, upload them onto YouTube (this can be unlisted so only viewed by people you send the link to) and share a link to that video with the panel via the Society Secretary. There is no advantage or disadvantage in submitting video auditions but please note that we strongly encourage auditionees to attend auditions in person where possible.

Auditionees with close connections with the Audition Panel may:

1 - Ask that their relative/partner leave the audition room while they perform, even though this may be to their detriment.

2 -Perform in front of their relative/partner but the panel member(s) in question may take part in the deliberation on all of the auditions but will abstain from the selection vote for that particular role.

In addition to the Panel and Membership Observer, there may be a **reader**/readers present at auditions. Readers will be invited by The Executive Committee to read in for dialogue audition pieces. They will not be part of the casting deliberations or have any vote in who is cast, though may be asked for their opinion during the audition day at the audition panel's discretion if deemed appropriate. If the audition panel is not able to cast a specific role from the auditions on the day, they are permitted to ask the reader/readers to audition for that specific part at a later date, if they believe they may be suitable for that part.

### **1.6.1 Chorus/Ensemble Auditions**

Chorus/Ensemble auditions are mandatory for all auditionees. The Musical Director may decide how the chorus auditions are to be conducted, but normally this will be in batches of five or six auditionees. Each auditionee will be typically expected to perform the set vocal chorus piece(s) on their own, with or without the musical notation in their hand. Depending on the show, the Production Director may set a movement and/or acting element to be performed by all chorus auditionees.

Auditionees will be taught the chorus vocal and any movement at pre-audition rehearsals. Where possible, once it has been set at a pre-audition rehearsal, a video of the movement set will be shared electronically with auditionees to practice at home prior to auditions.

Following chorus auditions, a Director and/or Musical Director has the option to ask auditionees to read and/or sing for a specific named part on the audition day, based on that individual's chorus audition.

### **1.6.2 Principal Auditions (Lead/Featured/Named Parts)**

If auditionees wish to audition for a named part this must be indicated on their audition form. The auditionee may request to be auditioned for up to **TWO named parts only**.

The audition form further allows you to indicate: -

1 - If you are willing to accept another role for which you may not have auditioned

2 - If you are unsuccessful with your principal audition(s) whether you are willing to be a member of the chorus/ensemble

A list of those who wish to audition for named parts will be drawn up before the audition day. However, if the Director and/or Musical Director choose to, they can only ask to see specific individuals for principal auditions, based on the chorus auditions they have viewed on the audition day.

Directors and/or Musical Directors can also ask chorus auditionees to read and/or sing for a specific named part on

the audition day, based on that individual's chorus audition, even if they didn't request to audition for that part. In this instance, there is no obligation to audition and you can decline this opportunity to audition for a named part if you choose.

Auditionees are allowed to perform the required material in any order they choose and are at liberty to 'set the stage' with whatever personal props they might bring and with any furniture the audition venue may offer. Prior to the start of their audition, performers may brief the readers as to where they are to stand, move, enter, exit, etc.

Please note that if you are asked to audition for a specific part on the audition day, following your chorus audition, you will be allowed some time to prepare and will not be expected to know any of the material by heart.

### **1.6.3 The Casting Deliberation**

When the final audition has been heard/seen, the Audition Panel will retire together with the Membership Observer to a separate room/venue to deliberate casting. It is the duty of the Audition Panel to assemble the best possible cast for the production, even if that means allocating roles to auditionees who have auditioned for alternative parts. In the event that the vote for a particular role is tied, the Chair has the casting vote.

Any readers present during auditions will not be part of the casting deliberations or have any vote in who is cast, though may be asked for their opinion during the audition day at the audition panel's discretion if deemed appropriate.

Parts that remain uncast will be subject to further auditions. This may be by holding another open call or the Audition Panel can invite specific auditionees and/or previous readers to return for further auditions, either in person or via video submissions. If this is not successful then the Executive Committee is empowered to make a cast selection from outside the Society, paying for such services if necessary.

There is no obligation for the Audition Panel to cast all auditionees in the show and the Panel will likely have to make tough and possibly unpopular decisions in the best interests of the show and the Society. The Audition Panel have to be able to speak freely during deliberations and therefore specific details of their deliberations will remain confidential. The Panel may give feedback to those unsuccessful in obtaining a place in the cast of a show, if deemed appropriate, but they will not be able to give all auditionees individual feedback on their auditions or on why they weren't cast for specific roles. If someone is not cast in a role, it is most likely because the Panel did not feel they were the right fit for that role in the specific production they are casting based on their audition. Members may have their own opinions on casting that differ from the casting decision of the Audition Panel, but the decision of the appointed Panel must be respected and can only be challenged by The Executive Committee (by majority vote) in exceptional circumstances, if there is strong evidence to suggest deliberations were influenced unfairly.

It should be noted that the Chair and members' chosen Observer are both charged to ensure the

auditions/deliberations are free, fair and without bias or favour. Whilst the Observer does not take part in deliberations but observes them, the Audition Panel can ask their opinion at their discretion if deemed appropriate, and the Observer can speak up as necessary to ensure deliberations are free, fair and without bias or favour.

#### **1.6.4 Notification of Cast List**

After the auditions, the Cast List will be passed to the Secretary who will inform the auditionees by email of the results of the Audition Panels deliberations.

A full cast list will be published on the COS website after all emails have been sent out.

It should be noted that each cast member will be subject to a probationary period after selection and may be replaced if, in the opinion of the Executive Committee, he or she does not meet the requirements of the allocated role.

COS operates a 3 strikes rule. If a cast member is absent on 3 occasions without informing the COS Secretary with acceptable reasons, they may be removed from the production at the discretion of the Executive Committee. Their show fee is non-refundable.

If a cast member misses a significant amount of rehearsals and the Director feels they won't be able to learn their part in time they will be removed from the production at the discretion of the Executive Committee.

It is also expected that members attend all rehearsals where possible and at very least a majority of rehearsals, if prior

commitments don't allow for full attendance. It is also expected that those missing any rehearsal make every effort to learn what is missed at the rehearsals in their own time and provide a stand in for any setting rehearsals.

Please refer to our cast code of conduct for more details on obligations for those cast.

There is no guarantee that everyone who auditioned will be cast in the show. However, all auditionees remain members of the Society, even if not cast in the show, and are encouraged to stay involved in other capacities (for example, volunteering backstage, on the committee and taking part in social events and other performances in the future).

## **2. COS Concert Auditions**

Auditions for COS Concerts may follow a similar format to main show auditions as described above in 1.6. or they may be open auditions, with the possible option for some auditionees to request a closed audition if deemed appropriate by the concert Director/Musical Director in liaison with the Executive Committee. Requests for solos, duets etc. should be declared on your concert audition form. However, Concert Directors and/or Musical Directors do often ask all auditionees to prepare a song of their choice to audition with instead. This allows the auditionee to showcase their talents to the best of their ability. All solo, duets etc. will be finally allocated by an Audition Panel made up of the Musical Director, COS Director/Choreographer, COS Chair and/or another member of the Executive committee,

making a panel of minimum three members. The COS Chair or appointed member of the Executive Committee will ensure the auditions/deliberations are free, fair and without bias or favour and have a casting vote if required. Any casting is based on auditions but it should be noted that previous records of attendance may be shared with audition panels for their consideration (as detailed in our privacy policy).

## **The CO2 Audition Process**

### **3.1 Prior to CO2 Main Show Auditions**

We offer the opportunity to attend a Workshop Day and pre-audition rehearsals for which a small charge is made to cover costs for those wishing to audition. If you are unable to attend the Workshop the same fee will be charged for the pre-auditions. You will need to register with the CO2 Membership Secretary in order to receive an audition form which will be sent electronically to you via google forms.

Auditionees will be told the number of cast members that the production team are looking at for the show.

### **3.2 Membership and Show Fees**

A Membership Fee plus a Show Fee will be required from every performer in the production payable at the first company rehearsal.

Membership is for one year and runs from 1<sup>st</sup> April – 31<sup>st</sup> March.

Members who are 16 years and over are eligible to audition for any COS production.

### **3.3 Audition Application**

The application form will be sent electronically via Google Forms – a hard copy or assistance completing the form can be organised by request.

The application form must be completed and submitted to the CO2 Membership Secretary by the last pre-audition rehearsal before the Audition Day. If the auditionee is 16 years and under, a parent/guardian will be required to complete the form on your behalf.

Auditionees will need to state any holiday dates or involvement in other productions that might affect their rehearsal attendance on their audition form. A provisional rehearsal schedule will be made available to assist with this. This will help the production team to reorganise the rehearsal schedule if required.

Forms must be completed and submitted in advance of the Audition Day and by the stipulated deadline for the production you are auditioning for.

It is an obligation of every performing member that they enter into each production on the understanding that they will take part in EVERY performance during the run of the show, including Technical and Dress rehearsals and assist with the 'get-in' and the 'get-out' of the theatre. We also expect a high level of attendance throughout the rehearsal process for anyone cast in the show.

### **3.4 Cast Selection Process**

The cast for any production will be selected by the Audition Panel appointed by the CO2 Committee and comprising of at least 5 members; the Production Director, Musical Director plus, if part of the production team, Assistant to the Director/Choreographer, and at least a further 2 members including the Chair of CO2. It is the duty of the Audition Panel to assemble the best possible cast for the production. This casting is predominantly based on audition performance and suitability for available roles but previous attendance, time keeping, effective communication of absences or lateness, attitude, rehearsal and show performance both on stage and backstage may have a bearing on casting, as this information may be shared with audition panels for their consideration (as detailed in our privacy policy and cast code of conduct).

The Audition Panel reserves the right to foreshorten any audition, named part or chorus, on the grounds that they have seen enough to be able to make a decision, or if time constraints dictate.

It should be noted that the CO2 Chair is on the panel to ensure the auditions are free, fair and without bias or favour. If the Chair is unavailable they will appoint the CO2 Vice Chair or another member of the Executive Committee to chair the panel on their behalf.

### **3.5 Audition Pieces**

With a show having been chosen and a Production Director and Musical Director appointed, the CO2 Committee will request

the Production Team to submit their list of audition pieces for the main (named) characters, and those of the chorus/ensemble. The audition pieces will be chosen to be representative of the whole character to be portrayed and will not be over-long. The combined list of dramatic and musical pieces together with Plot and Character Outline will be discussed at the workshop. The libretto passages and audition music will be made available to all potential auditionees.

### **3.6 Audition Chaperone**

The CO2 Committee can organise a Chaperone to be present in the audition room, if one is not present on the panel and they feel, due to the age of the auditionees this would be required.

Colchester Operatic Society works closely with Essex County Council to ensure compliance with Child Protection Legislation. The Society (COS/CO2) has a “Safeguarding Policy” available on the COS website. A copy to view will be available at all rehearsals and performances. Broadly speaking this affects all members aged 16 or under.

Registered chaperones will be responsible for the care of members aged 16 or under until they are returned to parents or a parent-nominated adult.

A chaperone will stay with auditionees until they are collected. They will not be allowed to leave unsupervised.

### **3.7 The Auditions**

It should be noted that CO2 auditions are CLOSED. This means that no members of the Society or other auditionees will be

present during auditions, apart from the auditioning panel and audition chaperone if required, plus readers.

Readers are invited by the CO2 Committee to read in for dialogue audition pieces. They will not be part of the casting deliberations or have any vote in who is cast, though may be asked for their opinion during the audition day at the audition panel's discretion if deemed appropriate.

Only those who have registered to audition and paid their membership will be allowed to audition.

A running order for the Auditions will be available at the venue on the day.

Provided due notice has been given, some members with prior engagements on audition day may be taken out of sequence and allowed to audition early or later in proceedings. If applicants find it impossible to attend on Audition Day, at the discretion of the CO2 Committee arrangements might be made for such members to audition at an earlier date. A video recording of the member's audition will be taken (if 16 years and under, parent/guardian permission must be obtained for this) and presented to the Audition Panel on the day of the auditions to be included in their deliberations. When the audition is being recorded all present, apart from the production team, will be asked to leave the space where the recording is being done.

Auditionees with close connections with the Audition Panel may;

1 - Ask them to leave the audition room while they perform, even though this may be to their detriment.

2 - Perform in front of them but the panel member(s) in question may take part in the deliberation on all of the auditions but will abstain from the selection vote for that particular role.

### **3.7.1 Chorus/Ensemble Auditions**

Chorus/Ensemble auditions are mandatory for all auditionees. The Musical Director may decide how the chorus auditions are to be conducted, but normally this will be in batches of five or six auditionees. Each auditionee will be typically expected to perform the set vocal chorus piece(s) on their own, with or without the musical notation in their hand. Depending on the show, the Production Director may set a movement and/or acting element to be performed by all chorus auditionees.

Auditionees will be taught the chorus vocal and any movement at the workshop and pre-audition rehearsals. Where possible, once it has been set at a pre-audition rehearsal, a video of the movement set will be shared electronically with auditionees to practice at home prior to auditions.

### **3.7.2 Principal Auditions (Lead/Featured/Named Parts)**

If auditionees wish to audition for a named part this must be indicated on their audition form.

The form further allows you to indicate: -

- 1- If you are willing to accept another role for which you may not have auditioned.

2-If you are unsuccessful with your principle audition, whether you are willing to be a member of the chorus.

Auditionees are allowed to perform the required material in any order they choose, and are at liberty to 'set the stage' with whatever personal props they might bring and with any furniture the audition venue may offer. Prior to the start of their audition performers may brief the readers as to where they are to stand, move, enter, exit, etc.

A list of those who wish to audition for named parts will be drawn up before the audition day.

Directors and/or Musical Directors can also ask chorus auditionees to read and/or sing for a specific named part on the audition day, based on that individual's chorus audition, even if they didn't request to audition for that part. In this instance, there is no obligation to audition and you can decline this opportunity to audition for a named part if you choose.

Please note that if you are asked to audition for a specific part on the audition day, following your chorus audition, you will be allowed some time to prepare and will not be expected to know any of the material by heart.

### **3.7.3 The Casting Deliberation**

When the final audition has been heard/seen, the Audition Panel will retire together with the Membership Observer to a separate room/venue to deliberate casting. It is the duty of the Audition Panel to assemble the best possible cast for the production, even if that means allocating roles to auditionees

who have auditioned for alternative parts. In the event that the vote for a particular role is tied, the Chair has the casting vote.

Any readers present during auditions will not be part of the casting deliberations or have any vote in who is cast, though may be asked for their opinion during the audition day at the audition panel's discretion if deemed appropriate.

Parts that remain uncast will be subject to further auditions. This may be by holding another open call or the Audition Panel can invite specific auditionees and/or previous readers to return for further auditions, either in person or via video submissions. If this is not successful then the CO2 Committee is empowered to make a cast selection from outside the Society, paying for such services if necessary.

There is no obligation for the Audition Panel to cast all auditionees in the show and the Panel will likely have to make tough and possibly unpopular decisions in the best interests of the show and the Society. The Audition Panel have to be able to speak freely during deliberations and therefore specific details of their deliberations will remain confidential. The Panel may give feedback to those unsuccessful in obtaining a place in the cast of a show, if deemed appropriate, but they will not be able to give all auditionees individual feedback on their auditions or on why they weren't cast for specific roles. If someone is not cast in a role, it is most likely because the Panel did not feel they were the right fit for that role in the specific production they are casting based on their audition. Members may have their own opinions on casting that differ from the casting decision of the Audition Panel, but the decision of the

appointed Panel must be respected and can only be challenged by the CO2 and/or Executive Committee (by majority vote) in exceptional circumstances, if there is strong evidence to suggest deliberations were influenced unfairly.

It should be noted that the Chair is charged to ensure the auditions/deliberations are free, fair and without bias or favour.

### **3.7.4 Notification of Cast List**

After the auditions, the Cast List will be passed to the CO2 Membership Secretary who will inform the auditionees by email of the results of the Audition Panels deliberations.

A full cast list will be published on the COS website after all emails have been sent out.

A CO2 membership form, a medical form and an acceptance statement will be emailed to cast members and must be completed and returned to the CO2 Membership Secretary on the first rehearsal call.

It should be noted that each cast member will be subjected to a probationary period after selection and may be replaced if, in the opinion of the Executive Committee, he or she does not measure up to their allocated role.

CO2 operates a 3 strikes rule, so if a cast member is absent on 3 occasions without informing the CO2 Membership Secretary with acceptable reasons, they may be removed from the production at the discretion of the CO2 Committee. Their show fee is non-refundable.

It is also expected that members attend all rehearsals where possible and at very least a majority of rehearsals, if prior commitments don't allow for full attendance. It is also expected that those missing any rehearsal make every effort to learn what is missed at the rehearsals in their own time.

Please refer to our cast code of conduct for more details on obligations for those cast.

Please note there is no guarantee that everyone who auditioned will be cast in the show and that we often have significantly high numbers of young people auditioning for CO2 shows, far more than we can accommodate in the show's cast.

#### **4 CO2 Concert Auditions**

Auditions for CO2 Concerts will follow a similar format to the Chorus Auditions in 3.7.1 above. All solo, duets etc. may be auditioned for but will be finally allocated by an Audition Panel made up of the Musical Director, CO2 producer and Choreographer/Movement Co-ordinator. The CO2 Chair will preside on the panel and will ensure the auditions/deliberations are free, fair and without bias or favour and will have a casting vote if required. Any casting is based on auditions but it should be noted that previous records of attendance may be shared with audition panels for their consideration (as detailed in our privacy policy).