



Charity No. 119885

Colchester Operatic Society Inclusion, Equality and Diversity Policy

This policy applies to Colchester Operatic Society (COS) and its committees, including Colchester Operatic Society Second Edition (CO2), who are collectively referred to as “The Society” and “Colchester Operatic Society”.

Colchester Operatic Society is a local amateur dramatic and musical theatre Society made up of members (amateur performing arts enthusiasts) who pay a small annual membership fee to belong to the Society.

Membership is open to all over 16 years old for COS and for all between 11-24 years old for CO2 regardless of background, socio-economic status, physical attributes and protected characteristics*, which include; race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, gender, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, sex or sexual orientation, age, disability and religion or belief.

We are the largest and oldest amateur company local to Colchester and have a good reputation for producing high-quality shows for local audiences.

OUR MISSION

INCLUSION, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Colchester Operatic Society wants to proceed as a diverse and inclusive organisation, accessible, welcoming and truly representative of the population of Colchester and its surrounding areas, offering equality of opportunity to our current and potential audiences, creatives and membership.

OUR VISION

Colchester Operatic Society, led by an Executive Committee of elected members (trustees), appreciate and understand the value of theatre as an important tool for physical and mental wellbeing, and the power of the platform for discussion and change.

We believe that the only way for the Society to maintain a position at the heart of the community, is to ensure the community is put at the heart of the Society.

Our productions usually reach 1000's of audience members, so we are uniquely positioned as an amateur theatre society to bring our community together to experience the wide-ranging benefits of theatre and performance. Our role must be to provide a safe, social and inclusive space, giving people with different backgrounds and experiences opportunities to learn from one another, forge new friendships all whilst learning and developing new and existing skills.

OUR COMMITMENT

We welcome and value the diversity of our members, audiences and creatives and believe everyone has the right to be treated fairly, equitably and with respect.

As a commitment to ensuring Inclusion, Equality and Diversity of our members, audiences and creatives, we have identified three key cases for Colchester Operatic Society. These are:



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- **The Creative Case** – with a diverse membership, we will ensure the Society creates high-quality, engaging entertainment that is honest, reflective and rewarding for its audiences and membership. We recognise that diverse teams in all areas of our activity will ensure the Society continues to be effective, adaptive and resilient
- **The Business Case** – since Colchester Operatic Society was formed over 100 years ago, audiences and society have changed and we want to reach the audiences and members of the future, recognising that our loyal supporters continue to expect best practice in diversity and inclusion
- **The Moral Case** – Creating a diverse and inclusive community of members and audiences has always been important to the Society. Therefore, we will continue to review and improve our processes and understanding to ensure best practice.

OUR EXPECTATIONS

- **Anti-discrimination** – Colchester Operatic Society does not accept discrimination**, victimisation, bullying or harassment in all its forms, including physical, verbal, written and online, towards any of its members, creatives or audiences and will treat all instances of discrimination**, victimisation, bullying or harassment extremely seriously, taking appropriate action in line with the Society's Complaints Policy and Procedures and Social Media Policy.

The Society will not discriminate or in any way treat anyone less favourably on the grounds of any protected characteristics*.

We have an appointed Inclusion lead, whose role is to actively drive the aims of this policy and our accompanying inclusion strategy in practice, leading a team of inclusion champions to promote Inclusion, Equality and Diversity in all aspects of the Society's activities and challenge views, dialogue and actions of others that are not in line with this policy.

- **Equality of Opportunity** – We acknowledge that some casting decisions are based on requirements of a script and we will work with the rights holders when relevant to achieve equality of opportunity. However, equality of opportunity does not just apply to casting decisions. We will aim for equality of opportunity when seeking new members, new committee members, creative teams, backstage and front of house volunteers.

When appropriate, we will take positive steps to meet the needs of underrepresented communities, especially when making invitations to our events and productions.

- **Equality of Access** – The Society will try to meet the access requirements of all our members, audiences, and creatives. We aim to ensure that our meeting, event, rehearsal and performance venues and spaces are accessible to all, including wheelchair users. We can produce papers and scripts in large fonts, or provide audio versions of documents where applicable, for those with visual impairments and have included large print for some of our policies and



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documents on our website. If you are disabled, become disabled, or have any other specific additional needs we encourage you to tell us about your condition and requirements so that we can consider what other reasonable adjustments or support may be appropriate to put in place.

In order to enact and maintain effective transformational change with regards to Inclusion, Equality and Diversity, Colchester Operatic Society expects all members and employed creatives to adhere to the following rules:

- Value all members of the Society, audience members, appointed personnel and volunteers irrespective of background, socio-economic status, physical attributes and protected characteristics*
- Treat each other fairly and with respect
- Recognise and value the individuality of members of the Society and ensure individual members receive any necessary support to participate in and access all opportunities that membership of the Society provides
- Make reasonable efforts and adjustments to remove barriers for individuals that may prevent them from participating in events, meetings, productions and performances
- Make reasonable efforts and adjustments to remove barriers for individuals that may prevent them from volunteering backstage. However, we recognise that backstage is an area in which safety is paramount and detailed risk assessments will inform us of the safest working arrangements and the most suitable and appropriate roles for individuals to undertake
- Report all instances of discrimination** to the Executive Committee, in line with the Complaints Policy & Procedures
- If instances of discrimination** are witnessed towards a member of the Society, volunteers or appointed personnel, this MUST be reported to the Executive Committee (please see our Complaints Policy and Procedures for details on how to do this)
- All existing members, volunteers and appointed personnel should encourage the promotion of the Society as an Inclusive and accessible community

NB: ***Protected Characteristics** include race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, gender, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, sex or sexual orientation, age, disability and religion or belief. (Equality Act, 2010).

****Discrimination** is defined as "The unjust or prejudicial treatment of an individual or group because of their protected characteristic/s*." It is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of their age, disability, gender, race, ethnicity, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity status, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, as detailed in the Equality Act (2010).

Resources used to draft this statement:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-guidance>

<https://www.noda.org.uk/download/166/factsheet-equal-opportunities-policy-noda>

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