

Welcome to TOC



Thames Opera Company are a newly formed community opera company based in Thurrock with a real emphasis on community. We put our chorus at the heart of our company, and we are open to anyone in the Thames Gateway area.

We passionately believe that opera should be accessible and enjoyed by all and invite everyone, no matter their background or musical ability to come and experience the joy that singing and performing opera can bring.

- No previous singing experience is required
- There is no audition
- There is no requirement to sing alone or to read music

As our name suggests, Thames Opera Company has an ambitious and diverse repertoire with a focus on, though not exclusively, opera. We aim to perform pieces staged or semi staged, and in their original language.

We provide rehearsal tracks, tips and techniques to grow our members' abilities and confidence, whilst having a lot of fun along the way.

New Starters: Frequently Asked Questions

HOW DO I KNOW WHICH SECTION I WILL BE IN?

There are four sections, going from those with the highest voices downwards: Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass. Each is split into 1 and 2, with 1 singing slightly higher than 2. Tenor and Bass are usually male singers, but in TOC we have female tenors too. For your first couple of sessions, here's a guide:

- Are you a woman with a high voice? Sit with Sopranos (maybe start with Soprano 2)
- Are you a woman with a middle/lower voice? Sit with the Altos (start with Alto 1)
- Are you a man with a higher voice? Sit with the Tenors (start with Tenor 1)
- Are you a man with a lower voice? Sit with the Basses (start with Bass 1)

If you decide to join the chorus, our Musical Director, Jeremy, will meet new members for a quick voice part check-up just to check that you are in the right section. He'll ask you to sing a few notes to see how high and low your voice goes. Don't worry, it's not an audition and only lasts a couple of minutes.

WHERE DO I GET THE MUSIC SHEETS FROM?

If you decide to join, go along to the chorus website www.thamesopera.org.uk and in the menu select 'more' and 'Rehearsals'. You will be able to download and print your music from there. If you have trouble printing, let your section rep know and we will get you copies of the music.

HOW CAN I TAKE PART IF I CAN'T READ MUSIC?

Lots of our chorus members can't read music. Others in your section will help you along, and we mostly learn by repeating sections of the songs after Jeremy or Ash sing them to us first. Jeremy will explain a bit about how the music works as we go along. Also, we get recordings of each section's part to download and listen to at home, so that you can listen and practice at your own pace. These recordings will also be available in the 'Rehearsals' section of the TOC website.

DO YOU JUST SING OPERA? I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT OPERA!

No! We sing mostly opera, but not always. We also sing songs from musicals, classical and modern songs and we sometimes have music specially composed for our chorus. It doesn't matter if you don't know anything about opera - the tunes are really catchy and they will grow on you!

SOME OF THE MUSIC YOU SING IS IN FRENCH/GERMAN/ITALIAN/RUSSIAN - HELP!

Most of us can't speak these languages either! Jeremy and Ash teach us the pronunciation of the words, and most of us make notes on our music sheets to remind us how we say the more difficult words. You'll soon pick it up. We try to always sing opera music in the language it was composed in - it's a challenge, but very rewarding.

I'VE HEARD YOU LEARN THE SONGS BY HEART FOR YOUR PERFORMANCES - HOW WILL I EVER DO THAT?

All of us thought at the start that we would NEVER manage to learn the songs off by heart, especially the ones in different languages. But we work together and share tips and hints for memorising the pieces we learn. The recordings on the website also help to learn the music off by heart too.

HOW OFTEN ARE REHEARSALS?

We rehearse every Monday during school term time, from 7.15 - 9.30pm. Everyone is expected to come regularly, but if you can't make it, please let your section rep know beforehand. When we have performances coming up, the rule is that in the term before the performance, you can only miss two rehearsals otherwise you won't be able to take part (as you won't be fully prepared). We usually have a couple of Saturday or Sunday rehearsals at some point in the year too, but we will let you know dates of those long beforehand. They are strongly recommended but optional.

HOW MUCH DO I PAY IF I WANT TO JOIN?

The Autumn Term 2022 cost is £50, but new joiners will only be asked to pay £40 as a starting cost. If you have difficulties paying this amount, please speak in confidence to your section rep, as we don't want people to be put off joining because of the cost.

HOW CAN I LET YOU KNOW IF I DECIDE TO JOIN AFTER MY TASTER SESSION (OR NOT)

After your taster session, you'll get an email from our New Membership officer (Daniela) and she will ask you if you'd like to continue to come. It's as that - say yes, and you're in!

