

Bath Opera – Audition Protocol (October 2023)

1. Introduction.

Auditions can be tricky to organise and casting can be difficult. Disappointment can be intense for those who are unsuccessful.

This protocol is designed to help directors get through the process efficiently and sensitively, so that the best cast can be assembled for each show.

2. Recommended audition dates and notice required.

Audition dates are up to the directors, but typically auditions for the February main show take place at the end of July, and auditions for the summer tour take place in early December.

The date of auditions, and the date when audition information will be put up on the website, should be published at least 2 months in advance. These two dates should be at least 6 weeks apart to allow auditionees ample time to prepare.

3. Discussions before auditions.

It is vitally important that the audition process is fair and transparent. No potential auditionee can be promised a part in advance, nor an implication given that they will get a role.

It is legitimate, however, to encourage people to audition, without any such promise.

4. Publicising auditions – website and elsewhere.

All audition information should appear clearly on the company website, to which other publicity should refer. The website information should: -

- Include the directors' introduction to the show and its proposed setting (especially if this differs from the original).
- Clearly state that the show will be performed in English, and which libretto will be used.
- Include the roles to be cast, with character descriptions, voices, playing ages and the audition pieces. The audition pieces should be downloadable as PDFs.
- Include the (downloadable) audition form, which should have details of the audition times and location, the performances and rehearsals, and to whom the completed form should be sent. It should be filled out with the auditionee's name, role to be auditioned for, contact details and availability.
- Make it clear that we are an amateur company who do not normally pay a fee to singers and clearly state any show fees payable. [Show fees should be waived for top quality singers in key roles, who are not expected to become regular members.]

Auditions should be published as widely as possible to members, and to opera singers within realistic travel distance of Bath. This should include social media sites, both of Bath Opera and of opera nationally.

Bath Opera auditions are open to all comers, and members of Bath Opera may attend. A present or recent member will be cast ahead of others, if their audition is as good.

If auditionees cannot attend on the audition date, they can be seen BEFORE the audition date provided the full panel can be assembled. Failing that, the auditionee can be invited to submit a video audition: although it should be made clear that this may disadvantage them. In this case, auditionees must be given a deadline to submit their video by, and the videos must be seen by the whole panel together.

5. Booking audition space.

A suitable space will be booked in good time by the Trustee responsible.

6. Audition panel.

The directors will assemble an audition panel to judge the auditions. The panel will include the Musical Director and the Stage Director (who will have the final decisions); they will be supported by the Chairman of Bath Opera (or deputed Trustee) to give confidence that due process is followed; and by one or two knowledgeable panellists, who can either be members of Bath Opera, or independent of Bath Opera. Panellists should not themselves be auditionees.

If at all possible, partners or close relations should not be on the same audition panel; and the panel should have both male and female members.

7. Auditions day.

The Trustees will ensure that the audition location is correctly set up and that arrivals are made welcome.

The directors will agree in advance who will conduct the auditions process. The company will pay for a separate accompanist if the Musical Director prefers to watch the auditions without playing. It is up to the directors to decide which order the auditions will take place, including matching up pairs of singers to be heard together. If auditionees have travel constraints the directors should try to accommodate them.

8. Reaching casting decisions.

Following the conclusion of the auditions, the panel will discuss and decide which parts they can cast from those who have auditioned, with due regard to singing and acting quality, suitability to the opera's requirements, and realistic matching to the other cast members. The panel's decisions are final and not open to appeal.

If the best audition for a role is satisfactory to the directors, then that role should indeed be cast from those auditioning.

Decisions should be kept strictly confidential to the panel until auditionees have accepted roles, and the directors judge that sufficient casting has taken place to publish the casting.

9. Informing auditionees, successful and unsuccessful.

Successful candidates should be contacted first to ensure that they accept the roles offered, as this might affect decisions on other auditionees, who meet the required standard.

If no auditions for a role meet the directors' requirements, then those who auditioned for that role must be informed that they have been unsuccessful, and the role re-advertised.

Directors may choose to inform successful and unsuccessful auditionees themselves or may feel happier if this is done by the Trustees.

10. Recalls and readvertising.

If there is no suitable auditionee for a role, then that role will be published as uncast, and further auditions arranged. Every effort should be made to have the full audition panel present at such auditions.

Recalls should only be made if the panel wishes to hear an auditionee in a different role, or for potential match with other cast members.