General CUOS Application Guidance 2025-6

Roles and Responsibilities

Musical Director:

- The Musical Director is responsible for all musical aspects of the production. Alongside the Director, they must hold auditions, cast the show, and plan a rehearsal schedule. They must also arrange music hire, fix an orchestra, and lead orchestral and vocal rehearsals.
- They should appoint an Assistant Musical Director and at least one répétiteur, and may wish to appoint further AMDs and reps.

Director:

- The Director should determine how the opera is staged and acted; simply put, they must have a vision for the show. This vision should be clearly presented in their application. They must also consider how this vision may be received by a demographically diverse audience.
- The Director should appoint the following production team members: Stage Manager(s), Costume/Publicity/Lighting Designer(s), Set Designer/Builder(s), Welfare Officer(s), and Language Coach(es), if applicable. They may also wish to appoint Assistant Directors or Choreographers.

Producer:

- The Producer is in charge of the administrative and financial side of the production process. They must create a detailed and realistic budget for the show, incorporating approximate quotes (provided by the Director and Musical Director) for items such as costumes, set, and music hire. Once the budget is finalised, the Producer is responsible for paying invoices, booking rehearsal and performance venues, overseeing the publicity campaign and organising ticket sales, both online and on the door. The Producer must also ensure that the production complies with Health and Safety regulations at all times.

Assistant Producer/Publicity Officer:

- The Assistant Producer(s)/Publicity Officer(s) must orchestrate the creation and distribution of promotional material. Their work should be completed to a high standard and as early as possible in the production timeline to ensure strong ticket sales. They may wish to appoint a Publicity Designer, Photographer and/or a Cinematographer.

Technical Director:

- The Technical Director oversees all technical aspects of the production, including sets, lighting, and props. They must work with designers to actualise creative concepts in a practical, safe, and budget-conscious manner. The Technical Director should also develop build schedules, supervise the technical crew, lead tech rehearsals, and ensure

that everything operates smoothly during performances. They must work closely with the Producer to ensure that the production complies with Health and Safety regulations at all times.

Choosing a Show

You should select a show which you are passionate about staging, but it must also be appropriate for CUOS. This means that student vocalists and instrumentalists should be able to perform the parts. You should also evaluate the extent to which your show will appeal to the Cambridge audience.

CUOS aims not to repeat shows too regularly: ideally, operas must not be performed twice within 5 years. All past productions can be found on the CUOS website. Mainshows are subject to additional restrictions, as clarified in the application pack.

If you are unsure whether your chosen opera will be appropriate, please contact us **before** applying.

Application Content

There are certain things which we need to know about a production before we can approve it. As such, your application must include the following information:

- **Your chosen opera**: Outline the key aspects of your show. Consider the following questions: *Why do you want to stage this opera? Why should CUOS stage it? Why are you the right team to produce it?*
- **Production team members**: Include a detailed overview of your experience.
- **Musical information**: full instrumentation, a summary of roles with associated voice types, and an indication of the musical difficulty of each part. Mention any specific challenges or unusual musical demands that the piece may present.
- **Dramatic information**: Provide a synopsis of your chosen opera and describe your artistic vision for it. Flag any difficulties that may arise (e.g. from the opera's themes or historical context) and explain how these will be handled responsibly.
- **Proposed dates, times and venues (Michaelmas Show):** Confirm that your chosen venue is available for the dates and times you are proposing.
- **Publicity plan:** Evaluate whether your show will be easy or difficult to sell. Propose strategies for engaging the widest possible audience.
- **Production timeline:** Establish dates for auditions, casting, publicity deadlines, ticket launches, tech/dress rehearsals and (for the Michaelmas Show) performances.
- **Budget:** Your budget must be detailed and as accurate as possible. Include up-to-date quotes from relevant suppliers (e.g. music publishers, venues, and costume/set retailers). Your income projection should be based on a pessimistic estimate of ticket sales (40-60%). Your budget should also include a 10% contingency for unforeseen expenditure.
- **Ticketing:** Tickets for Michaelmas and May Week Shows are generally sold via Tessera (https://www.tesseraticketing.com/), which takes a small commission. Mainshows have historically used ADC Ticketing, for which the commission is higher.

Choosing a Venue

For the Michaelmas Show, you may choose your own venue. Recent Michaelmas Shows have used the ADC Theatre, Fitzpatrick Hall, Fitzwilliam Auditorium, Trinity College Chapel and Emmanuel College Chapel. Please note that both the ADC and the Fitzpatrick have their own competitive application processes for venue allocation. If you intend to use either of these spaces, you must register your interest with the relevant organisation well in advance.

Other venues, such as college chapels, auditoriums or non-University spaces (e.g. the Round Church) are also entirely acceptable. Regardless of the venue you choose, you should carefully consider any potential limitations that may affect your production.

If you have any questions regarding venue suitability, or if you are experiencing difficulty securing a space, please feel free to **contact the CUOS committee** for advice.

Expectations

Assuming your application is approved, and CUOS funding is provided (for which you will need to sign a liability contract), you will be free to run your show. Whilst CUOS encourages artistic autonomy, there are certain expectations in place to ensure that all productions uphold the society's high standards: not only with regard to musical and dramatic quality, but also welfare and accessibility.

- Any significant changes to your show – including those to artistic vision, music, or your production team – must be submitted for CUOS' approval prior to implementation. Additionally, important aspects of the show must be approved by the CUOS President before they are confirmed and implemented. This includes casting choices, publicity design and any partnerships/sponsorships.

- All CUOS productions must hold open and fair auditions. As a university society, CUOS productions are primarily intended to engage current students of the University of Cambridge. Casting should reflect this, with efforts made to include both undergraduate and postgraduate participants wherever possible. Casting decisions must be based solely on musical and dramatic ability, and collaborative potential with other candidates. Other factors, such as race, gender identity, physical appearance, sexuality, etc., must not be considered.

- CUOS funding is provided with the expectation that it will be recovered through ticket sales. To ensure the sustainability of the society and to enhance the experience for performers and audiences alike, it is essential that production teams prioritise audience engagement. This includes creating a production and publicity campaign which are accessible, inclusive, and broadly appealing. While we recognise that many operas explore difficult or sensitive themes, we do not ask you to compromise artistic integrity – only that these themes are handled with care and responsibility.

- The income target included in your budget should be treated as a realistic goal. The budget submitted in your application will be considered final upon approval by the

Senior Treasurer, and you must not exceed your stated expenditure. A 10% contingency should be included to account for unexpected costs.

- Although you will have creative and logistical control over your production, it remains a CUOS-affiliated show. This is a shared responsibility, and we encourage you to make use of the CUOS committee's support and experience. Many committee members have worked on previous productions and can offer practical guidance.

- When applying, teams should understand that they are committing to working together throughout the full production process—from planning and rehearsals to performances. The committee does not guarantee that requests to change production team members will be approved, and such changes will only be considered under exceptional circumstances.

- Production teams must respond promptly and truthfully to any requests for information or progress updates from the CUOS committee. These updates help ensure that your production has the best possible chance of success, and that any issues can be addressed early.

- In general, members of the production team should not take on performance roles in the opera. This is due to the significant demands of production work, which are vital to the success of the show. In most cases, performing in addition to holding a production role is not sustainable and could compromise the overall quality of the production. This same guideline applies across multiple productions: individuals involved in one CUOS production team should not normally be part of the cast or team of another simultaneous CUOS production.

Please note that failure to meet these expectations may result in CUOS withdrawing its affiliation from the production, or in exceptional cases, revoking funding.

Prospective applicants are encouraged to contact the committee before submitting their application. We may be able to offer advice to strengthen your submission and flag any major issues, giving you the opportunity to address them before the deadline. The committee may also provide, upon request, further information such as ticket sales from past shows, should this be helpful. The committee can also provide additional information, such as the rate of past shows' ticket sales, upon request.

We look forward to hearing from you! If you have any questions, please do get in touch with Livia Bell at president.cuos@gmail.com.