

Wedmore Opera is looking for a Music Director for 2025

Wedmore Opera was founded in 1988 to produce opera in the village of Wedmore, Somerset. It is a charity, run by Trustees. It has no office base or employees.

Since 1988 it has performed in the church, a theatre tent and the village hall. The soloists (who are auditioned for each production) and the orchestra (fixed by cellist Jo Lewis) are mostly professional and receive a fee for their work. Typically there is a production every two years, although this pattern was interrupted by Covid. Each production has run for three nights (Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday). The most recent was The Marriage of Figaro, in October 2023. In July 2024, there was a concert of arias and duets, with piano accompaniment. In July 2025, we will be hosting a Burns Night in the village hall.

The population of Wedmore and the surrounding area is growing and we are looking to get more people involved, on and off stage. The chorus has shrunk since the pandemic and we are looking for a Music Director whose inclusive approach will help to rebuild it.

If you would like an informal discussion before applying, please email us at wofigaro@gmail.com and we will arrange a time to speak.

Responsibilities

1. Ensure that Wedmore Opera maintains its high musical standards.
2. Agree with the Trustees and Orchestra Manager (Jo Lewis) the opera to be produced in October 2025, including a chorus of all abilities.
3. Audition and select soloists for the October production, with the Stage Director.
4. Develop an inclusive and enthusiastic chorus (through a small number of singing workshops in the spring/early summer and through rehearsals for the October production).
5. Use your knowledge and contacts attracted local musical talent, including liaising with other local organisations (including the education sector) to offer development opportunities to young singers.
6. Agree with Orchestra Manager, Jo Lewis, the orchestral forces required, which she will fix.
7. Identify and source the appropriate scores and orchestral reductions.
8. Work within the budget agreed with the Trustees and keep details of expenditure incurred.
9. Work closely with the producer, stage director and musicians to produce excellent, creative accessible performances that attract and excite new audiences, including younger people.
10. Conduct all performances.
11. Conduct at least 75% of rehearsals and arrange cover for any sessions that you cannot attend for good reason.
12. Identify an accompanist for rehearsals.
13. Propose the musical programme for possible fundraising events in between operas.
14. Support the Trustees in achieving the objectives of Wedmore Opera, including meeting current and potential donors and attending fundraising events, when possible.

Essential skills

- Excellent musicianship
- Conducting voices (opera, musical or choral) and ensembles of any size, involving professional and non-professional musicians
- The ability to lead, enthuse and support all the musicians involved in a production
- The ability to work productively with the production team, almost all of whom are volunteers
- Organisation, including scheduling and time management

Given the need for regular rehearsals in the run-up to the October production, this opportunity is most likely to suit a Musical Director living within reasonable travel time of Wedmore.

Application process

Please respond to this role description, outlining your interest in the role and the knowledge and skills you would bring to it. Please also include your cv, showing your other current commitments.

Dates

Deadline for applications, emailed to wofigaro@gmail.com by 1pm Friday 19th September

Interviews and auditions for shortlisted candidates will be on a mutually convenient evening in the first half of October

Decision: End of October

Events provisionally planned for 2025

Burns Night, 25 January (we would like to involve the Music Director if possible)

Two chorus workshops, two Saturdays in the spring

A production with three performances, 8,10,11 October 2025 (including auditions for soloists and rehearsals for chorus and soloists).

Historically, production rehearsals have been on Sunday afternoons.

Fee

Guided by Making Music, we are anticipating a fixed fee in the region of £4k.

Agreed travel expenses will also be covered.

When overnight accommodation is needed you (and any visiting soloists) will be welcome guests of Wedmore residents.

Wedmore Opera is not an employer. The Music Director will need to be registered as self-employed (for all or part of their tax affairs) and be responsible for their own tax and National Insurance.