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Call for Applications: Female and Non-Binary Conductor Traineeship

Emerging female and non-binary conductors based in the UK are invited to apply for our annual intensive 10-week training scheme aimed at addressing the gender imbalance within classical music.

In recognition of the fact that talented women, inclusively defined, and non-binary conductors are less likely to find a way into the industry, the scheme provides wide-ranging training and support within the UK's national opera company in the North.

Two dedicated conducting workshops under the guidance of Music Director **Garry Walker** will provide the successful applicant with invaluable first-hand experience conducting the Orchestra of Opera North. Over the course of the 25-26 Winter Season, Opera North's Head of Music **David Cowan**, together with **Oliver Rundell** and **Annette Saunders** of the Company's Music Staff, Chorus Master **Anthony Kraus** and visiting conductors will give the benefit of their experience in one-on-one discussions and lessons.

The scheme also offers unprecedented access to the season's preparations from first musical rehearsals with soloists and conductor, through coaching sessions, Chorus and production rehearsals, right up to stage and final rehearsals with our orchestra and singers.

Additionally, there will be a chance to get involved with the work of Opera North's busy Learning and Engagement department, as well as outreach departments, including weekly rehearsals with the [Youth Company](#) and the [Opera North Youth Orchestra](#).



Michal Oren © Olivia Da Costa

Our 2024-25 Traineeship programme saw conductor **Michal Oren** taking part in the rehearsal process for [*The Flying Dutchman*](#), [*The Magic Flute*](#) and [*The Magic Flute Lite*](#). For Michal, the experience has been incredibly useful in a variety of ways:

“It’s quite difficult to choose what I’ve enjoyed the most during my traineeship. I think for me, the one-to-one sessions were the most exciting, because they’re an opportunity to have a private session with people, to analyse your conducting, and to get some really, really helpful tips.

The masterclasses were also great, as was watching the productions, I learnt so much from the dynamic between conductor and director – and just to be part of the team was really thrilling.”

Garry Walker, Opera North Music Director, comments:

“We created this scheme in the hope of inspiring more female and non-binary artists to see opera and orchestral music as a viable career path and to ensure that we, and the industry at large, continue to draw on the widest range of conducting talent.

“As one of the country’s leading arts organisations, we are perfectly placed to provide mentorship and a valuable insight into the workings of a professional orchestra and opera company. We are looking for someone with outstanding musical and communication skills, who may or may not yet have had much conducting experience but wishes to explore a pathway into conducting by means of this immersive programme.”

For anyone thinking of applying, Michal says:

“It’s a great programme and I would definitely recommend it to everyone to try, particularly when you want to improve your operatic knowledge and to gain insider knowledge of the

operatic world. I really hope it not only encourages my female colleagues to try out more opera and opera conducting but also to become conductors.”

Schedule

The Female and Non-Binary Conductor Traineeship will take place over ten weeks of Opera North’s 25-26 Winter Season, between **24 November – 19 December 2025** and **5 January – 13 February 2026** (with an option to stay for an extra week), and will require residency in Leeds during that period. A bursary of £3,500 and subsistence payment of £1,500 will be provided, paid weekly.

Applications are encouraged from people from all backgrounds who are currently underrepresented in the workforce, including minority ethnic communities and candidates with disabilities. As a specific role aiming to improve career development opportunities for women within conducting, the role is open to all candidates **based in the UK** who identify as female or non-binary.

We also welcome applications from parents and would consider making adjustments to the programme as necessary. While elements of the traineeship are fixed to the company schedule, these are known well in advance, allowing us to plan around them. We can provide support finding accommodation and childcare.

How to apply

Candidates should submit the following via Musical Chairs:

- Video footage of between 5 and 15 minutes showing exceptional musicianship and communicative skills (performing or conducting), preferably from a live event
- A short video introducing yourself and explaining why you’ve applied for the programme
- Letters of recommendation from at least one, ideally two, professional musicians
- A CV
- You should also complete a [diversity monitoring form](#)

If you have any additional needs that we should be aware of to support you with your application, please provide details to Hannah Williams: hannah.williams@operanorth.co.uk.

The closing date for applications is 10.59pm, Monday 7 April 2025.

Interviews

Interviews for shortlisted candidates will be held on Thursday 24 April 2025 in Leeds.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to an interview and audition with members of the Opera North Music and Planning Departments. As part of this, you will be asked to conduct a répétiteur and a singer in three short extracts. Please prepare to conduct:

1. The First movement of Mozart’s Symphony No.36
2. A soprano, plus accompanist, for ‘Donde lieta usci’ from Puccini’s *La bohème*
3. The ‘Marche du soldat’ from Stravinsky’s *Histoire du soldat*

We expect the whole session to last around 30 minutes.