



University of York
Opera Society

Constitution





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Preface

The University of York Opera Society aims to join together those who are passionate about music, theatre and opera. It offers performance platforms, shows and workshops for students to learn new skills and demonstrate them, making new friends as they go. We highlight and support the development of talented members, who may go on to pursue opera as a career, as well as provide exposure and development opportunities to those who have had little experience of opera.

This document is our definitive and codified constitution, outlining how the Opera Society should engage with its audience and by which means it can continue to function.

Society Ratified by YUSU: **March 2019**

Constitution Ratified: **Society AGM on 8th March 2019**

1. Designation, definition and context:

- 1.1. The name of the Society shall be the 'University of York Opera Society', which may be abbreviated to 'Opera Society' or 'Society' in contexts where there is no ambiguity.
- 1.2. Copies of this constitution and of any rules adopted by the Society will be available to all members at any time and can be downloaded from the Society website.
- 1.3. The University of York Student Union, which may be abbreviated to 'YUSU', is the institution which oversees, supports and utilises the running of all student societies at the University of York.
- 1.4. The Society will be considered a *Music & Performance Society* within YUSU, and be represented by the relevant member of the YUSU Societies Committee.
- 1.5. Those chosen to collectively represent the Society, shall be referred to as the 'Committee', led by the 'Executive'.
- 1.6. The Constitution set forth here is based on the Societies Constitution template provided by YUSU, and is intended to be a more focused working document, which is binding, for the Society; however, it shall never supersede the YUSU ratified Constitution, which remains sovereign.

2. Aims and objectives:

- 2.1. The aims and objectives of the Society are to promote the interests of the Society, and act on behalf of the Society Members.
- 2.2. The Society's specific aims shall be:
 - 2.2.1. To organise, support and promote opera amongst its members, and to spread opportunities within the operatic world across the University of York and beyond;
 - 2.2.2. To promote the appreciation and enjoyment of opera;
 - 2.2.3. To promote the performance of opera through the use of performance platforms, and enabling production teams to engage with other musicians and perform an opera in its entirety with the support of the Society;
 - 2.2.4. To promote social activities associated with opera and the Society's membership.
- 2.3. In pursuing its objectives, the Society shall liaise and collaborate with the University's Department of Music.

3. Membership:

- 3.1. There shall be 2 classes of membership:
 - 3.1.1. Standard membership:
 - 3.1.1.1. Standard membership shall be available to anyone who is a member of YUSU.
 - 3.1.1.2. In addition to section 3.1.1.1, standard membership will be open to non-YUSU members who are not subject to disciplinary proceedings or consequent condition of their membership, this includes leave of absence.
 - 3.1.2. Honorary membership:
 - 3.1.2.1. Honorary membership may be conferred on any person by resolution of any member of the Executive Committee, for a specified period of time.
 - 3.1.2.2. Honorary members may not vote at official Society meetings; however, they may enjoy the benefits of the Society and take part in musical or social activities and competitions organised by the Society and purchase at a reduced rate such number of tickets to Society events as the President may decide.

- 3.2. Non-YUSU members and honorary members must not exceed 20% of the overall Society membership.
- 3.3. The Society must have at least 15 YUSU standard members.
- 3.4. Only Opera Society members may participate in ensembles and competitions and attend General Meetings.
- 3.5. Membership is not required for participation in social events or for the purchase of merchandise; however, the Committee reserves the right to charge reduced rates to members.

4. Subscription:

- 4.1. The annual subscription for membership of the Society shall be such amount as is approved by a General Meeting on recommendation from the Committee.
- 4.2. The current standard membership fee is £5 for the remainder of an academic year.
- 4.3. The Committee shall ensure that ensemble members are given sufficient opportunity to pay their membership subscription before the required date.
- 4.4. In the event of the dissolution of the Society, any remaining funds shall be donated to YUSU, in accordance with charity law.

5. Annual General Meetings:

- 5.1. There shall be an Annual General Meeting (hereafter 'AGM') of the Society in the spring term of each academic year of which at least 7 days' notice shall be given.
- 5.2. All general meetings must be open and advertised to all members.
- 5.3. Nominations for all Committee positions must be received by the Returning Officer 5 days in advance of the AGM.
- 5.4. The quorum required for an AGM shall be 20% of YUSU members of the Society or 10 YUSU members of the Society, whichever is greater.
- 5.5. AGMs shall be chaired by the President of the Society or, in the event of his or her absence, by the Secretary or Treasurer.
- 5.6. Minutes of AGMs shall be taken by the Secretary, or in the event of the Secretary chairing the meeting, by whomever he or she nominates of the Committee to take the minutes.
- 5.7. The agenda of the AGM shall be as follows:
 - 5.7.1. The Minutes of the previous AGM and of any intervening EGM shall be distributed for approval and, if approved, be signed by the President of the Society as a correct record.
 - 5.7.2. Matters arising from the Minutes may be discussed.
 - 5.7.3. Amendments to the constitution (see *Section 11*).
 - 5.7.4. The outgoing President and the Treasurer shall each present a report on the preceding year which, if approved, shall be formally adopted.
 - 5.7.5. The election of the President shall be announced. Unsuccessful candidates may stand for election to any other non-executive Committee post, without advance nomination.
 - 5.7.6. Election of members to the Executive Committee. Unsuccessful candidates may stand for election to any other non-executive Committee post, without advance nomination.
 - 5.7.7. Election of members to the general Committee. Unsuccessful candidates may not stand for election to another post.
 - 5.7.8. Other business may be transacted.

- 5.8.The election of officers shall be carried out in a free and fair democratic manner.
- 5.9.All members are entitled to vote. Voting for each position shall be decided by a simple majority, and all votes will be cast by secret ballot, and can be done in advance of the voting day. 'Postal' votes may also be received, for which the deadline is the moment of polling.
- 5.10.The option to re-open nominations ('RON') must be available in all elections for all positions.
- 5.11.Additional guidance on hosting elections can be found at *Appendix V*.

6. Extraordinary General Meetings:

- 6.1.If one-tenth of the membership or 7 members of the Committee ask the President of the Society in writing for an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM), the President shall call such a meeting at the earliest possible date, ensuring to give at least 7 days' notice thereof.
- 6.2.The President may call an EGM at any time, for any reason.
- 6.3.The quorum required for an EGM shall be one-tenth of the membership of the Society.
- 6.4.EGMs shall be chaired by the President of the Society or, in the event of his or her absence, by the Secretary or Treasurer.
- 6.5.Minutes of EGMs shall be taken by the Secretary, or in the event of the Secretary chairing the meeting, by whomever he or she nominates of the Committee to take the minutes.

7. Committee Meetings:

- 7.1.The Committee shall meet at least 3 times per term.
- 7.2.The quorum required for a meeting shall be 5 members of the Committee.
- 7.3.Meetings shall be chaired by the President of the Society or, in the event of his or her absence, by the Secretary or Treasurer.
- 7.4.Minutes of AGMs shall be taken by the Secretary, or in the event of the Secretary chairing the meeting, by whomever he or she nominates of the Committee to take the minutes.
- 7.5.If a member of the Committee for no good reason fails to attend 2 consecutive meetings or to fulfil his or her responsibilities, the Committee may debate a motion of no confidence in him or her. If the motion is carried by a simple majority, the Committee position will be vacated immediately and may be filled at a General Meeting.
- 7.6.Prior to Committee meetings, the President and Secretary will compile the agenda and provide access to this and the minutes of the previous meeting for everyone in attendance.
- 7.7.All members of the Society shall have the right to propose items for the agenda by contacting the President of the Society.

8. Code of Practice:

- 8.1.No member should undertake any action that may bring the reputation of the Society, YUSU or the University into disrepute.
- 8.2.A member must not participate in, or omit to mention, anything which might cause physical or reputational damage to themselves or others.
- 8.3.All members must adhere to the health and safety rules and procedures of YUSU, the Society and the University.
- 8.4.Members should not attend workshops, activities and meetings under the influence of drink and/ or drugs.
- 8.5.Members must respect the different viewpoints of the Society's members if different from their own.

- 8.6. Members must respect the property of the University, YUSU, the Society and of other members.
- 8.7. Participant selection for Society activities should be free and fair.
- 8.8. Socials (and any related activity) must be opt-in only and have no effect on eligibility to hold membership of the Society or a Committee position.
- 8.9. Drinking should not be the main purpose of any social, and members should be able to participate in all Society activities without drinking alcohol, and without any coercion to drink.
- 8.10. The Committee will ensure that members of the Society should not pressure or coerce any other member into any action with which they feel uncomfortable.
- 8.11. Any action taken by the members on behalf of or while representing the Society in any way will also be accountable to the YUSU *Code of Conduct* found in By-Law 12.
- 8.12. Breaches of this code of practice can result in Society, YUSU or University disciplinary action.
- 8.13. The Society will adhere to the GDPR policy (see *Appendix IV*) in order to protect their members' data.
 - 8.13.1. The Society should make its members aware of how their data will be used and be able to justify doing so.

9. Committee Members:

- 9.1. The Committee will be collectively responsible for the effective management and day to day running of the Society.
- 9.2. All members of the Committee must be current YUSU members, who are enrolled and studying on a University of York programme.
- 9.3. The Committee shall have the power to set Society rules, in accordance with the Society Constitution.
- 9.4. A new Committee must be elected at least annually at the Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- 9.5. The Committee will ensure an up-to-date list of Committee members is provided to YUSU within two working days of any election.
- 9.6. The Committee will be composed of the following:
 - 9.6.1. President;
 - 9.6.2. Secretary;
 - 9.6.3. Treasurer;
 - 9.6.4. Showcase and Workshop Manager;
 - 9.6.5. Events Officer;
 - 9.6.6. Press and Publicity Officer;
 - 9.6.7. Fundraising Officer;
 - 9.6.8. Ordinary Members;
 - 9.6.9. Extraordinary Members (x2).
- 9.7. The Executive Committee will be composed of one elected President, Secretary, and Treasurer.
- 9.8. The responsibilities of each Committee role are detailed in *Appendix I and II*. These may be subject to change without the need for approval at a General Meeting (see *Section 11*).
- 9.9. The President shall have the power to co-opt up to two additional permanent Ordinary Members and two temporary Extraordinary Members to the Committee.
- 9.10. The Committee shall ensure that activities of the Society are pursued in the best interests of its members.

- 9.11. The election of members of the Committee shall take place at the AGM or, exceptionally, at an EGM. In the event of a tie, the sitting President has a casting vote.
- 9.12. Following the AGM, the new Committee will attend a joint meeting with the retiring Committee before the end of the Spring Term. Every retiring Committee member will also meet individually with his or her successor, and the incoming President, to explain their role in detail and hand over all business.
- 9.13. Should any member of the Committee resign, he or she should do so in writing to the President, and his or her vacated post may be advertised and filled at an EGM.
- 9.14. Should the President vacate the post, executive authority passes equally to the Secretary and Treasurer, who executes this authority to call an EGM - within 14 days - to fill the vacancy.

10. Suspension or Exclusion of Society Members or Committee Members:

- 10.1. No Committee member shall be deemed to be dismissed unless they have received during their term of office a vote of no confidence from their Society members.
- 10.2. Before a vote of no confidence can be considered against a Committee member, the complainant must have attempted to settle the matter informally, and one of the Committee members will be responsible to oversee this informal process, and act as a mediator when and where they deem necessary.
- 10.3. A no confidence motion must be voted on by the Committee at a standard meeting. For it to be authorised, 25% of the Committee must vote in favour of bringing a confidence motion.
- 10.4. If a no confidence motion is successful in a standard committee meeting, then a Society EGM must be held within 7 days, and in order for a vote of 'no confidence' motion to be carried, it must be supported by two-thirds of those voting.
- 10.5. If the no confidence motion is successful or a Committee member resigns, then the position becomes vacant immediately, and a Committee member must inform YUSU.
- 10.6. The Society will then need to hold another EGM to re-elect a new person to the position. In the interim period, the Committee may choose to vote in a current member of the Committee to temporarily fill the vacancy until the EGM.
- 10.7. Further no confidence motions must be on different grounds and not within one calendar month of the general meeting at which the last no confidence motion against that Committee member was heard.
- 10.8. No member of the Society shall be deemed to be suspended or excluded without a formal process involving YUSU. This is to ensure fairness and transparency of processes.
- 10.9. Any matter which may be considered grounds for suspension or exclusion must be referred as a matter of urgency to YUSU, who will instigate the process for an investigation.
- 10.10. If an imminent risk is identified, a Society member may be suspended immediately by the President of the Society for a period of up to 14 days.
- 10.11. Any assessment of risk must be carried out by YUSU at the earliest opportunity.
- 10.12. If no process is initiated within these 14 days to permanently exclude the member then the suspension will be lifted and considered resolved.
- 10.13. Exclusion of a member is a penalty that can only be considered in exceptional circumstances and subject to the below procedure.
- 10.14. Any member facing exclusion from a Society must have a fair hearing at which they have the right to speak in their defence, have a supporter present and have been advised of the allegations made, and supporting evidence disclosed at least 7 clear days in advance.

- 10.15. The panel for the hearing will be chaired by the Student Activities Officer (or the York Sport President if there is a conflict of interest) with the following additional members: a member of Societies Committee (who is not a member of any other Society in the same group as the Society) and a member of the York Sport Committee, neither of whom should have previous knowledge of the nature of the allegations, and a YUSU Staff member will minute the meeting.
- 10.16. Any decision to exclude a member requires a majority vote from the panel and must be communicated in writing, with a statement of reasons, to the excluded member within 7 days.
- 10.17. A member may appeal against any decision to suspend or exclude them on the grounds of lack of adherence to process, provision of further evidence or evidence that the decision was biased or prejudiced. The member must communicate their intention to appeal in writing to YUSU.
- 10.18. Any appeal of a decision to suspend or exclude a member must be heard by a panel who were not involved with the original decision, have no prior knowledge of the case and will be chaired by a Full Time Officer. Ideally this panel will also consist of one more member each from Societies Committee and the York Sport Committee. However the panel will primarily be constituted with a view to fairness and elimination of conflict of interest.
- 10.19. An appeals panel only has the power to uphold or overturn a decision by the initial panel. They may not suggest alternative sanctions.

11. Amendments to the Constitution:

- 11.1. The Constitution may be amended by two thirds of the members present at an AGM or EGM.
- 11.2. If amended, the constitution shall be re-ratified by the Societies Committee before coming into effect, this includes a change of name.
- 11.3. The appendices to this constitution will be subject to change at the discretion of the Committee without approval at an AGM, but any changes must be distributed at an AGM.
- 11.4. In the event of a dispute as to the meaning of any part of this Constitution, the President shall be asked to give a ruling. If any member of the Society is not satisfied with this ruling, he or she may ask the President for an Extraordinary General Meeting, of which the decision by a simple majority shall be final.

Appendix I Executive Committee Job Descriptions

1. President: *The holder of the office of the President agrees*

- 1.1.To provide leadership for the Society;
- 1.2.To be a spokesperson/figurehead and to represent the Society to relevant external stakeholders;
- 1.3.To ensure that the Society adheres to the relevant policies and to this constitution;
- 1.4.To act as Returning Officer for all elections to positions for which he or she is not contesting;
- 1.5.To ensure that the Society Committee contains officers named in section 9.6;
- 1.6.To attend the Society Officer Training and Society Open Meeting;
- 1.7.To assist all Committee members in their duties in an advisory or in a practical capacity
- 1.8.To call, chair, and set agendas in conjunction with the Secretary for meetings of the Committee;
- 1.9.To publicise the Society, with the assistance of Press and Publicity Officers;
- 1.10.To prescribe and outline a vision for the future, to be realised by the Committee;
- 1.11.To perform any other duties as mutually agreed by the Committee and/or YUSU.

2. Secretary: *The holder of the office of the Secretary agrees*

- 2.1.To attend Society Officer Training and Society AGM;
- 2.2.To take care of Society administration, keeping the Society's *Backpages* up-to-date, including signatories and memberships;
- 2.3.To arrange meetings and book rooms or venues;
- 2.4.To keep minutes of meetings as necessary;
- 2.5.To communicate regularly with members, specifically weekly emails and answering specific requests addressed to the Society;
- 2.6.To be aware of key dates for the Society throughout the year;
- 2.7.To maintain an ordered Society email account;
- 2.8.To perform any other duties as agreed by the Committee and/or the President.

3. Treasurer: *The holder of the office of the Treasurer agrees*

- 3.1.To administer the Society's finances in accordance with the laws of the land and by-laws of YUSU;
- 3.2.To attend Society Officer Training and Society AGM;
- 3.3.To learn and understand the Students' Union financial system;
- 3.4.To apply for the annual grant and extra funding from YUSU as necessary;
- 3.5.To keep track of all income/expenditure;
- 3.6.To keep the members informed of the Society's financial situation;
- 3.7.To organise fundraising or sponsorship for the Society;
- 3.8.To counter-sign every claims form and transport form;
- 3.9.To create a budget for each event and discuss with YUSU Student Opportunities Development Coordinator as necessary;
- 3.10.To perform any other duties as agreed by the Committee and/or the President.

Appendix II Committee Job Descriptions

4. Showcase and Workshop Manager: *The holder of the office of the Showcase and Workshop Manager agrees*

- 4.1.To co-ordinate or Produce the termly showcase series;
- 4.2.To co-ordinate additional workshops for Society members;
- 4.3.To ensure that communication between prospective showcase platforms and opera performance production teams take place to avoid clashes;
- 4.4.To ensure that these platforms are publicised across the University, with the assistance of Press and Publicity Officers;
- 4.5.To ensure that programmes are presented to audience members for each event;
- 4.6.To ensure that performers comply with the regulations set forth in this Constitution;
- 4.7.To liaise with the performer(s) and the Fundraising Officer to provide a successful execution of performance platforms within budget;
- 4.8.That this position shall not be shared with any other person;
- 4.9.To perform any other duties as agreed by the Committee and/or the President.

5. Events Officer: *The holder of the office for Events agrees*

- 5.1.To co-ordinate the regular schedule of Society outreach events;
- 5.2.To liaise with representatives of other societies to form strong partnerships;
- 5.3.To ensure that all members of the Committee are engaged with all events;
- 5.4.To remain responsible at all events hosted by the Society;
- 5.5.To develop plans for and project manage fundraising events in conjunction with the Fundraising Officer;
- 5.6.That this position may be shared with a maximum of one other elected person;
- 5.7.To perform any other duties as agreed by the Committee and/or the President.

6. Press and Publicity Officer: *The holder of the office for Press and Publicity agrees*

- 6.1.To promote all events and concerts happening within the Society;
- 6.2.To produce any publicity material for the Society as directed, and ensure its continuing outreach;
- 6.3.To effectively manage the Society's social media presence;
- 6.4.To organise the selling and distribution of merchandise;
- 6.5.That this position may be shared with a maximum of one other elected person;
- 6.6.To perform any other duties as agreed by the Committee and/or the President.

7. Fundraising Officer: *The holder of the office for Ensembles agrees*

- 7.1.To report directly to the Treasurer and President;
- 7.2.To support event budgets; find cheaper solutions; research cheaper venues; work with the Executive Committee to secure sponsors; manage relationships with audience to ensure success of events;
- 7.3.That this position shall not be shared with any other person;
- 7.4.To perform any other duties as agreed by the Committee and/or the President.

8. Ordinary Members: *The holder(s) of the office of Ordinary Member for the Society agrees:*

- 8.1.To speak on behalf of members of the Society at Meetings;
- 8.2.To assist Committee members with their duties;
- 8.3.That this position may be shared with a maximum of one other elected person;
- 8.4.To perform any other duties as agreed by the Committee and/or the President.

9. Extraordinary Members: *The holder(s) of the office of Extraordinary Member for the Society agrees:*

- 9.1.To undertake the specific task for which they have been appointed to the Society's Committee;
- 9.2.To answer directly to the President for all matters to do with the Society work which they are undertaking;
- 9.3.To attend Committee Meetings during the time decreed by the President only;
- 9.4.To perform any other duties as agreed by the Committee and/or the President.

Appendix III Declaration of Committee Members

By completing the 'Full Committee List' YUSU Document, I, an Opera Society Committee Member, agree to abide by, enforce, and operate in accordance with this Constitution, YUSU's Constitution, YUSU's Policies and guidelines in the Resource Hub, and accept the YUSU Societies Code of Conduct and Room Booking Terms and Conditions.

“How does the Opera Society use my personal information?”

This appendix explains how the Opera Society (“we”, “us” and “our”) handles and uses the personal information we collect about our members for processes relating to our operations and activities. When changes are made to this statement, we will publish the updated version on our website and email you.

The controller for your personal information is the University of York Opera Society. The person responsible for data protection within our society is the President of the Society.

We collect and process your personal information for a number of purposes, including:

- Maintaining your personal details (e.g. your name and preferred contact details), including ensuring effective communications with you.
- Keeping financial records (e.g. payment of your membership fees).
- Maintaining a formal record of your activities with us.
- Undertaking research into our activities.
- Managing complaints made to us.
- Managing society alumni relations and fundraising.

Our normal legal basis for processing your personal information is your consent, which you gave at the point you become a member of the society and which you can withdraw at any time, including by resigning your membership. We keep your personal information for as long as we need it, and usually for 3 years after your membership ceases.

“How does the Opera Society share my personal information?”

- Personal information is not normally shared outside of the society and its members. We share some of your personal information with the University, Students Union, and specific third parties, only where there is a specific need to, including for record of attendance at events.
- We use Student Union IT facilities to store electronic copies of personal information.

We may also be subject to a legal requirement (with or without your consent) to share your personal information with the University or a government agency (such as the police or security services or other statutory authorities with investigatory powers) under special circumstances (e.g. relating to tax, crime or health and safety). Where feasible and appropriate, we will notify you of our intention to share such information in advance.

“What are my rights as an Opera Society Member?”

You have the right to access the personal information that we hold about you. You also have the right to ask us to correct any inaccurate personal information we hold about you, to delete personal information, or otherwise restrict our processing, or to object to processing or communications, or to receive an electronic copy of the personal information you provided to us. Please note that all of these rights are qualified in various ways.

If you have questions or concerns about how your personal information is used, please contact us using the above details. If you remain unhappy with the way your information is being handled, or with the response received from us, you have the right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner’s Office at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, SK9 5AF (<https://ico.org.uk/>).

Appendix V Hosting Elections

Before the AGM:

1. Find a date and time at the end of Week 9 in Spring Term.
2. Ask the current committee to submit their 'Emails of Intent' to the President confidentially: if they would like to remain in-post, run for another position, or step down.
3. In Week 8, advertise the AGM (elections) to the wider membership, and inform them of all the positions available on the committee (see *Section 9.6* of the Constitution).
4. Receive nominations for committee positions by Friday Week 8.
5. Advertise who is running for each position on Monday Week 9.
6. From this point, members may vote via email/website to the President for their chosen candidates.

During the elections at the AGM:

7. For each committee position, each nominated candidate will be allowed two minutes to give a speech.
8. Questions may be asked after all the candidates have spoken.
9. Everyone, except the President, closes their eyes.
10. The President explains the process, then reads the name of each candidate, and then offers the option of 'Re-open Nominations'. The present members vote by raising their hand.
11. The candidate with the most votes, including online votes, wins.

After the AGM:

12. Each outgoing committee member organises a handover in Week 10 with the newly-elected member and the President.
13. Passwords for Society accounts are exchanged (and usually changed by the new committee).
14. Follow the processes outlined by YUSU for re-ratification and updating the signatories/committee lists (this can be found in the Society email account).
15. Allow a week to changeover, with the old committee people being on-hand to support the new.

Voting Regulations

Only the nominated people, who submit nominations for a specific role by the deadline, may run for a position.

Only unsuccessful Executive candidates may run for any other non-executive position; others must have been nominated.

In the event that a post is not filled at the AGM, the new Committee reserves the right to offer the role to anyone who came close second for another contested post.

In the event that the sitting President runs for the role again, or for another position on the committee, a member of the Committee who is not standing for that position (usually the sitting Treasurer), nominated by the sitting President, becomes the Returning Officer for that position election alone. This also means that they receive online/postal votes in advance for that position.

The voting is conducted confidentially, using simple majority.

In the event of a tie, the sitting President (or, in the event of the sitting President contesting a post, the nominated Returning Officer) has the deciding vote.