

FAQs for The Mercury and COS/CO2 collaboration project

Colchester Operatic Society and our junior society, CO2, are thrilled that the official announcement regarding our forthcoming collaboration project of Oliver! with The Mercury Theatre is now public!

We have been working closely with The Mercury Theatre for a number of years, and when this collaboration was mooted the committee felt that it would be an excellent opportunity for our members to gain insight into the workings of a professional theatre. We also hope that members (onstage and backstage) will develop new and valuable skills which we can utilise going forward.

As always, the Society and The Mercury are keen to ensure that we deliver an exceptional show whilst providing an amazing experience for our COS and CO2 members. This project is like nothing we have done before, and therefore show dates, rehearsal dates, tech expectations etc are all going to be 'not the norm'.

Following the announcement, the committee has received a number of requests for further information. We have therefore produced a FAQ below, answering some of the most common questions:-

When are the auditions for Oliver?

The auditions for the CO2 company will be held on Sunday 5th May from 09:45 to 4pm at The Abbey Field Centre, CO2 7UW. Auditions for the COS company will be held on Sunday 12th May from 09:45 to 4pm at The Abbey Field Centre, CO2 7UW.

If you would like to audition for a principal role, please refer to the General Audition Info Sheet which can be downloaded from The Mercury website, the COS website or the COS Facebook page:

<https://www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/event/oliver/>
www.colchesteroperaticsociety.co.uk
<https://www.facebook.com/colchesteroperaticsociety/>

How much will it cost to take part in Oliver?

To take part in Oliver you must be a member of the Society. Membership costs £10 for the year and fees are collected at pre-auditions or on the day of auditions. Performing members will also have to pay a £75 non-refundable show fee which is collected at the first rehearsal. Costumes will be provided, but you will be asked to provide your own footwear and some personal items (tights, etc).

This year, we are also offering five bursary places to assist those who might not otherwise be able to take part. If you would like further information about the bursaries, please contact cos1theatre@hotmail.com.

What will happen at auditions on 5th/12th May?

All auditionees will be required to learn and perform an excerpt from a company song and dance; these will be taught at two pre-audition workshops to be held on Wednesday 1st and Thursday 2nd May for CO2 and Wednesday 8th and Thursday 9th May for COS.

Those who have submitted a video audition for Oliver, Dodger, Bet or Nancy will have been advised by 24th April whether they are through to the next stage. Note that if you submit a video audition and are not invited through to the next stage, you are still welcome to audition for another role or to be part of the company.

Although auditionees are invited to prepare for any principal role, please note that the audition process will be run differently this year, to give members experience of 'the industry norm'. This means that following the company auditions, the panel will deliberate over the lunch break and then invite members to audition for a particular role that the panel feel they would be suited to.

Can I just turn up at the pre-audition workshops/auditions?

No, you will need to register in advance by emailing cos1theatre@hotmail.com before 24th April to express your interest in taking part. This is to assist us with the audition process, and to ensure that you do not miss important information or changes to the schedule.

How can I prepare for the auditions for other principle roles?

Audition material for other principle roles will be made available online from 24th April, to give you a chance to prepare. However, as above, the audition panel will decide who they would like to take forward past the company audition on the day.

Do I need to fill in an audition form if I am auditioning for the company only?

Yes – please complete an audition form (available to download from The Mercury website, the COS website or the COS Facebook page) and submit this to cos1theatre@hotmail.com, or bring it with you to the pre-auditions/auditions.

I am younger than 16 but look older. Can I apply for the role of Bet or Nancy?

Due to chaperoning restrictions, the role of Bet will be restricted to auditionees who are 16+. Due to the more adult nature of the role, Nancy will be played by someone 18+.

I'm 18, but I think I look younger and would like to be in Fagin's gang – is this OK?

Yes, just follow the audition instructions for Fagin's gang

I've checked the rehearsal schedule and I can't make some of the dates – should I still audition?

As mentioned above, Oliver will not be like an 'ordinary' COS/CO2 production. The level of commitment expected, and number of rehearsals planned is greater than for our usual shows, and we want to emphasise this to potential auditionees before they commit.

However, this is still an amateur society, and we are mindful of the fact that our members have other commitments and planned holidays. We have deliberately avoided planning rehearsals during the 'holiday season' for this reason, but if there are still dates that you

cannot make, we would invite you to list them on your audition application to be considered by the audition panel.

Please note, the Society operates a 'three strikes' rule for unauthorised absences, i.e. where members miss a rehearsal and we have not been notified in good time. The Society also reserves the right to dismiss cast members who miss a significant number of rehearsals, even with authorised absences.

The rehearsal nights are confusing! Who will be rehearsing when and where?

We apologise for the confusion! Some of the factors which initially led us to call the company on a Tuesday night have now changed, and we have therefore gone back to the 'normal' COS night of a Thursday for the company call. Rehearsals will take place as follows:-

Tuesday nights - Principals at St Teresa's School, Clairmont Road, Colchester

Wednesday nights – Juniors and Fagin at The Abbey Field Centre

Thursday nights – Adult Company at The Abbey Field Centre

Alternate Sundays – Full Company at The Abbey Field Centre

Although every alternative Sunday sounds like a lot, there are actually only five rehearsals on a Sunday for the run of Oliver (plus band call) – typically, we would usually do at least three (plus band call).

Why is the tech run so long?

COS and CO2 usually get a show set up and ready for opening night in three days – something industry professionals have always considered highly unusual! Oliver is going to be bigger and more complex than our usual shows, and we are also in a brand new venue. This has necessitated more tech rehearsals.

I'm interested in helping out backstage – how do I get involved?

COS and CO2 have a fantastic team of volunteers who skilfully manage all aspects of backstage, including lighting, props, costumes, front of house, prompt, sound etc. We welcome new members to the backstage family, and if you would like further information, please email cos1theatre@hotmail.com with your name, contact details and an indication of what area of backstage you would like to be involved with.

I would love to be involved with Oliver! But sadly I cannot fully commit to the rehearsal period – are there other ways to be involved with the show?

Yes! As mentioned above, we are always on the lookout for non-performing members.

I can't commit to Oliver - when will there be another opportunity to perform with COS or CO2?

We understand that not all our members will be able to commit to Oliver, as happens with every show we do. However, we have a concert lined up for early Feb 2020 (exact dates and venue tbc), with rehearsals starting late October/Early November, which all members and prospective members are encouraged to come and be a part of. It's called "Dare to be

different" and is being directed by Katie Cutmore with Musical Direction by Geoff Osborne. We will post more detailed information about this when all dates are confirmed.

We are keen to have members of CO2 involved with the concert too and have a small section of songs specifically planned for those younger members (11-16 years). Those over 16 years are automatically eligible as members of COS.