



Call for Applications: The Opera North Conductor Traineeship

We're seeking emerging conductors who are women, inclusively defined, based in the UK, for our intensive nine-week training scheme aimed at addressing the gender imbalance within classical music.

In recognition of the fact that talented women 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 26-27 Winter Season, Opera North's Head of Music **David Cowan**, together with **Oliver Rundell** and **Annette Saunders** of the Company's Music Staff, our Chorus Master **Anthony Kraus** and visiting conductors will give the benefit of their experience in one-on-one discussions and lessons.

The scheme offers unprecedented access to the preparations for our forthcoming productions for our Winter season in Leeds, from first musical rehearsals with soloists and conductor, through coaching sessions and Chorus and production rehearsals, right up to stage and final rehearsals with our orchestra and singers.

There will also be a chance to take a further part in our productions with a possible opportunity to conduct concerts and performances as part of the projects being organised by our busy Learning and Engagement department, as well as outreach departments, as well as to take to the piano to assist in language coaching sessions and rehearsals.



Beth Fitzpatrick, Opera North 25/25 Trainee Conductor

Our 2025-26 Traineeship programme saw conductor **Beth Fitzpatrick** become a part of the rehearsal process for several operas. She also conducted our Little Listeners: Orchestra Unpacked concerts, as well as conducting some rehearsals for [*Pass the Spoon*](#) and cover rehearsals of [*The Marriage of Figaro*](#). Additionally, she played the piano in some of the the language coaching sessions for the latter.

For Beth, the experience has been incredibly useful in a variety of ways:

“I’ve been able to observe rehearsals of [*The Marriage of Figaro*](#) and [*Peter Grimes*](#), as well as [*Pass the Spoon*](#), which is a modern opera – less in my wheelhouse, but it was still really interesting. I also got to conduct a little bit in the cover rehearsals and to work with the Learning & Engagement team and the Orchestra of Opera North on a family show. It’s been really great so far. I’ve been worked really hard, but that’s exactly what I wanted.”

Garry Walker, Opera North Music Director, comments:

“We created this scheme in the hope of inspiring more women 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, Beth says:

“Don’t put obstacles in your way such as thinking, ‘oh, I don’t know, Figaro as well as I should’, or, ‘I don’t really know opera at all’ – this is where you can come to learn it and this is the safe place to make the mistakes. Then, when you go out into the professional world, you’ve already got that foundation of knowledge where you’ve made the mistakes and you’ve learned from them, and you can grow from that.”

Schedule

The Female and Non-Binary Conductor Traineeship will take place over ten weeks of Opera North's 26-27 Winter Season, between **23 November – 18 December 2026** and **4 January – 12 February 2027** (with an option to stay for an extra week if on interest), 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 disabled people. This scheme is specifically designed for women, inclusively defined — that is, cis and trans women — **based in the UK** who face particular barriers within the conducting profession.

We recognise that gender-diverse people may also have experienced misogyny or the challenges of navigating womanhood. If that applies to you, we warmly encourage you to apply.

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 11.59pm, 10th May 2026.

Interviews

Interviews for shortlisted candidates will be held on 18th May 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* and recit 'E Susanna non vien' from Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*
3. The 'Marche du soldat' from Stravinsky's *Histoire du soldat*

We expect the whole session to last around 30 minutes.

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