

Head of Music



Waterperry Opera Festival Recruitment Pack 2026



Thank you for your interest in Waterperry Opera Festival's Head of Music role

Dear Applicant,

With our current Head of Music moving on to new adventures (while still working with us as co-director of our YA programme) we are now seeking a dynamic new Head of Music to join the festival team.

Waterperry is a fast moving opera festival that offers an accessible programme of opera, Learning & Participation and Young Artist opportunities throughout the year. We have ambition and a genuine passion for the work that we do that runs throughout the team and board of trustees.

The Head of Music is an integral part of the team, who works part time throughout the year, with more intensive involvement during the rehearsal period in July and the festival period in August.

We're looking for someone who is enthusiastic, with a can-do attitude, to work within a small but thriving team. The role will suit a candidate who is a freelance musician, with flexibility within their diary throughout the year to allow them to take on this work. This is a role for someone who has a keen eye for detail, is well organised and adept at administrative duties beyond the rehearsal room, and is calm when multitasking.

If this sounds like you, we'd love to hear from you.

With all good wishes,

John Savournin

Artistic Director / CEO, Waterperry Opera Festival

How to apply

To apply, please send a **CV and covering letter** showing how your skills, knowledge and experience align with the Key Responsibilities and Person specification, to **Artistic Director & CEO, John Savournin**, at john@waterperryoperafestival.co.uk. Letters should be no longer than two pages. All applications will be acknowledged.

If you require any support with this process, or if you would like an informal conversation about the role, please contact John via the email address above.

The deadline for applications is **Monday 21 September 2026 at 9am**. We will respond as soon as possible after the deadline to all applicants to let you know the outcome of your application.

Please ensure that you complete the **Equalities Monitoring Questionnaire** which can be accessed [HERE](#). This form will not be disclosed to anyone involved in assessing your application.

If you are shortlisted for a **first-round interview**, you will be invited to attend an online interview on **Friday 25th or Monday 28th September 2026**. Thereafter, if you are shortlisted for a **second-round interview**, you will be invited to interview in person at our London office space near Bond St Station on **Thursday 1st October 2026**. We will have the interview in an accessible space in the building.

We will ask all interviewees if there are any adjustments to the interview process that they would like us to make. We want our recruitment process to be fair and positive for all.



Who we are



Our Story

Founded in 2017, Waterperry Opera Festival was developed to create innovative productions and engaging participatory events at the beautiful Waterperry House & Gardens. Our inaugural festival launched in 2018, with a 3-day season of opera for 1,000 attendees. Since then, in 8 years, we have produced over 40 productions for over 25,000 attendees. 2025 saw our most ambitious year yet, with a festival packed full of operas, and tours of *Semele*, *Messiah* and *Winnie the Pooh*. In total over 4,500 attended our 10-day festival in August 2025.

We have developed a unique and very successful Young Artist Programme, helping artists at the beginning of their careers to develop their skills and hone their craft in a safe and exciting environment. The programme offers mentorship and training in contemporary opera practice and collaborative theatre-making. Additionally, we have developed wider education projects locally and nationally, partnering with *Oxfordshire Musical Educational Partnership*, *Oxfordshire County Youth Orchestra*, and *Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance*. Work for children and families has been core to our work, with a number of projects in recent years including a BSL integrated and immersive production of *Hansel & Gretel*, and a delightful *Peter and the Wolf*. We have also toured across the country to *Opera Holland Park*, *Buxton International Festival*, *Newbury Spring Festival* and *Lichfield Festival*.

Vision

For more people to try opera, be enriched by it, and think it is for them.

Mission Statement

Waterperry Opera Festival is a unique and innovative opera festival hosted at the beautiful Waterperry House & Gardens in Oxfordshire. The festival offers high-quality, accessible, and socially relevant work, created, and performed by a diverse company, which bridges the gap between artists and audiences.

We aim to:

- Make our work accessible and inclusive – by developing new diverse audiences for opera, producing work in English, where possible, and offering affordable tickets to our audiences.

- Create socially relevant work – by making it meaningful to today’s audiences through an exploration of contemporary social issues and timeless themes that touch the very nature of the human condition.
- Bridge the gap between artists and audiences – by offering innovative, immersive, and site-responsive work, pushing the boundaries of the operatic form, and producing talks, masterclasses, and workshops to inform, encourage and inspire.
- Support a diverse community of artists – by offering equal opportunity for all, growing a company from a broad variety of backgrounds, and developing diverse emerging talent on our Young Artist Programme.

Value Statement

- **Collaboration** - We foster a real sense of teamwork and inclusion within the organisation; supporting one another to achieve our collective vision.
- **Integrity** - We aim to deliver on our promises and be open, respectful, and honest in all we do.
- **Imagination** - We are imaginative in our approach to everything we do and seek to make artistic work of the highest quality through creativity, innovation, and curiosity.
- **Communication** - We value clear, transparent, and sincere communication across our company to create an inclusive working environment and encourage our audience to share in our vision, where everyone’s voice is respected.
- **Growth** - We strive to grow as an organisation in all that we do and encourage feedback from our artists and audiences, to drive continuous improvement.



Job Description

Terms of Employment

POST: Head of Music

PAY: Approximately £6000 per annum (calculated from c.52 days work across the year).

REPORTING TO: Artistic Director & CEO and Festival Music Director

WORKING CLOSELY WITH: Festival Music Director, General Manager, Orchestral Manager, Company Manager, Production teams and Music Staff.

PERIOD OF CONTRACT: This is a one-year fixed term, freelance contract from 1st October 2026 to 31st September 2027, with possibility of renewal.

HOURS: c.52 days across the year, listed here as the equivalent amount of days across each month, as follows:

October - 0.5 days

November - 0.5 days

January - 2 days

February - 2 days

March - 4 days

April - 4 days

May - 4 days

June - 4 days

July to August - 30 days in total (from start of rehearsal period, 12th July 2027 to end of festival, 23rd August 2027)

September - 1 day



Role Responsibilities

- The role provides administrative and artistic leadership within the Waterperry team. It involves working alongside the core team in the preparation throughout the year ahead the festival, and working alongside the Festival Music Director and Music Staff to fulfil a high level of artistic quality during the festival. The role is required to represent the festival throughout the year, be an ambassador for the company in the industry by working to boost the presence and reputation of the work done by the festival.
- The role is expected to be involved in the following areas:
 - General artistic planning throughout the year
 - Scheduling
 - Auditions
 - Supporter Events
 - Musical preparation for the festival (scores, scheduling)
 - Maintaining an active presence at all rehearsals throughout the London rehearsal period - supporting music staff and playing and conducting rehearsals as required
 - Maintaining an active presence across the festival at all final rehearsals and performances.

Person Specification

- Proven track record as a repetiteur for an opera company.
- Ability to play piano, conduct or sing as required across the festival.
- Knowledge of how an opera company works.
- Knowledge of the operatic canon.
- Excellent people skills, with ability to work well with colleagues across multiple departments
- Excellent attention to detail and experience of scheduling.
- Self-motivated and detail-oriented, with a methodical approach to work and the ability to take initiative.
- Enthusiastic team player, committed to supporting colleagues and fostering a positive work environment.
- Excellent time management skills, capable of multitasking and prioritising effectively.
- Commitment to diversity, equality, and inclusivity in the workplace.
- Passion for WOF's mission, vision, and values.

