

General Manager



Waterperry Opera Festival
Recruitment Pack 2025



The Elixir of Love (2021)

Thank you for your interest in Waterperry Opera Festival's General Manager role

Dear applicant,

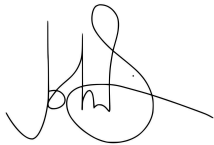
Thank you for your interest in applying for this exciting role within our growing organisation.

Waterperry is an incredible, fast moving opera festival, that offers a genuinely 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. With our current General Manager moving on to a new CEO role in Finland, we are now seeking a dynamic new General Manager to join the festival team.

It's important to note that, ideally, the successful applicant would take up post as close to the beginning of February as possible, but there may be some flexibility for the right applicant.

It's also important to say that there is room for a flexible discussion about the specifics of this role, as we may also be recruiting a part time role that has the potential to be tailored in response to this recruitment process.

I'm very much looking forward to reading your application, should you choose to apply, and in the meantime wish you a very happy festive season.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Savournin', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

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 29 December 2025 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 2nd or Monday 5th January 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 **Wednesday 7 or Friday 9 January 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. Please do let us know if there is anything we can do to improve this.



The Barber of Seville (2024)

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: General Manager

PAY: £32,000 - £37,000 per annum (depending on experience)

REPORTING TO: Artistic Director and CEO

RESPONSIBLE FOR: Company Manager, Audience & Engagement Manager, Residency Manager, Marketing Officer

WORKING CLOSELY WITH: Head of Production, Production Manager, Festival Music Director, Head of Music, Co-Directors of the Young Artist Programme

PERIOD OF CONTRACT: This is a permanent contract after passing the three-month probationary period. During the probation period the notice period required by either party is two weeks. Subsequent to satisfactory review and passing probation, the notice period is increased to three months.

HOLIDAY PERIOD: 25 days per annum plus bank holidays

HOURS: 40 hours per week. Regular hours are 1000 - 1800 Monday to Friday, but fulfilling 40 hours in a more flexible schedule is negotiable. The post holder will be required to work some evenings and weekends. This is a hybrid role that includes regular in-person meetings and workdays at our London office, conveniently located near Bond Street station.

Context of the Role

The General Manager is a central part of a dynamic, fast-paced environment where every day brings new challenges and opportunities. We're a fast-growing company with a passion for continuous learning and a "can-do" attitude. This hands-on role is involved in every aspect of planning and delivering our yearly activities, with a notable ebb and flow across the year. The successful candidate will have a crucial role in ensuring the smooth and successful delivery of our festival, which sees our team expand from a small and collaborative tightly knit group to a company of over 100 people during the summer. We are seeking a people-oriented individual to be a key point of contact, responsible for looking after team members and serving as a central source of information for various departments across the organisation. We're looking for someone who can

take the initiative and contribute to our strategic priorities, with the opportunity to shape planning and make a meaningful impact. Moving forward, a key responsibility will be consolidating delivery processes and building a strong foundation for future financial, artistic, and strategic growth.



Peter and the Wolf Family Workshops (2024)

Role Responsibilities

General Management

- Participate in Management Team and Board Subcommittee meetings, contributing to strategic planning.
- Manage and update online databases to ensure GDPR compliance.
- Oversee internal communications, meeting planning, and minute-taking as needed.
- Coordinate Priority and General Booking openings; support and assist the Audience & Engagement Manager and Box Office Manager with inquiries.
- Collaborate with Marketing to deliver marketing strategy and the development of new audiences and participants for the Festival, including to support delivering impactful campaigns and creating newsletter content as required.
- Build and strengthen strategic partnerships, exploring future projects and collaborations.
- Serve as Designated Safeguarding Lead, ensuring adherence to WOF's Safeguarding Policies for young participants.
- Handle staffing, from recruitment and interviews to audition scheduling and artist communications.
- Prepare and issue detailed contracts and collaboration agreements, clearly outlining responsibilities and expectations.
- Maintain relationships with singers, musicians, creative and technical teams, stage management, and agents; and to foster partnerships with external agencies in opera production.
- Act as the main point of contact for artists and agents, administering NA requests as necessary.
- Gather and log Company Member details for handover to the Company Manager during peak season.
- Develop a Festival accommodation plan and source additional options as needed.
- Coordinate travel arrangements for company members during tours and performances, ensuring expenses are pre-approved and align with budget.

Producing

- Collaborate with the AD/CEO to develop and maintain the company's calendar of events, including national tours, the WOF Annual Summer Festival, Winter Festival, and various projects such as masterclasses and workshops.
- Individually produce small-scale projects and events, and act as an assistant producer supporting the AD/CEO on larger-scale production.
- Assist the AD/CEO in scheduling company-wide rehearsals and project-related activities and events.

- Work in partnership with Technical and Production Teams to establish and monitor project timelines, providing feedback on planning and execution to ensure successful delivery.
- Organise production royalties and manage the hiring of musical scores.
- Coordinate resources (e.g., music and documentation) for rehearsals and company meetings.
- Participate in production meetings for all artistic program productions.
- Liaise with Venue Managers to manage bookings, preparing spaces for activities such as auditions, rehearsals, and events.
- Attend WOF productions and events as required.

Festival Management

- Oversee the smooth operation of the Festival, providing support to Production Teams as needed.
- Work with the Audience & Engagement Manager to ensure great experience and customer service for our Festival attendees.
- Act as the AD/CEO's deputy in Festival activities when required.
- Assist the Residency and Kitchen Managers in planning the residency in Waterperry house, ensuring residency plans are accurate and up to date.
- Coordinate and attend donor receptions throughout the Festival.
- Assist the Company Manager with travel arrangements for company members.

Finance

- Oversee assigned budgets and provide monthly financial reports to the AD/CEO.
- Maintain payment records and supply company members with necessary payment details.
- Administer all invoices, including staff fees, production costs, petty cash, and expenses, ensuring accurate coding and coordination with the WOF Treasurer.
- Collaborate with the AD/CEO to develop and manage production budgets, ensuring strict financial oversight.
- Assist and collaborate with the AD/CEO in board reporting.
- Work closely with the AD/CEO and members of the board to produce financial spreadsheets, such as cash flow reports.

Human Resources

- Manage staffing needs, including recruitment, audition scheduling, and clear communication with artists.
- Draft and issue detailed contracts and agreements for all personnel, ensuring role clarity and expectations.
- Collaborate with the AD/CEO on HR matters, serving as the primary contact for personnel issues.
- Develop, implement, and communicate HR policies and procedures that adhere to best practices organisation wide.
- Ensure WOF operates with comprehensive policies to support best practices in all areas.
- Work with the AD/CEO to update and maintain the Company Festival Handbook and organisational policies.
- Support and train line managers, ensuring they understand and fulfil their responsibilities effectively.
- Supervise the Audience & Engagement Manager, with a focus on audience management and ticketing.
- Oversee the Residency Manager, ensuring smooth operation of all residency activities at Waterperry House.

Fundraising

- Support the AD/CEO in expanding WOF's Individual Giver memberships by researching growth initiatives.
- Oversee the management of all aspects of 'Bronze,' 'Silver,' and 'Gold' giving levels, including data collection, communication, and relationship management.
- Administer Gift Aid on donations and ensure the WOF Treasurer has access to necessary records.
- Research potential Trusts and Foundations and assist the AD/CEO in developing targeted fundraising strategies.
- Collaborate with the AD/CEO on applications to Trusts, Foundations, and Arts Council England.
- Plan and execute fundraising events, overseeing budgets, stock, catering, and expense reporting.



Peter Rabbit's Musical Adventure (2018)

Person Specification

Essential

- Extensive experience in a professional theatre/opera environment, ideally as a General Manager or in a similar role.
- Proven track record in producing theatre/opera productions and creative projects.
- Strong negotiation skills with experience in contract discussions involving agents and artists.
- Familiarity with technical requirements of opera and theatre, along with experience collaborating with technical teams to achieve high production values.
- Robust administrative and office management skills.
- Solid financial acumen, including experience in drafting and managing budgets.
- Exceptional organisational and planning abilities, with experience working flexibly under pressure to prioritise tasks and meet deadlines.
- Ability to work collaboratively, forming effective partnerships both internally and externally.
- 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.
- Excellent Microsoft Office skills.
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills.
- Commitment to diversity, equality, and inclusivity in the workplace.
- Passion for WOF's mission, vision, and values.

Desirable

- Experience managing HR systems.
- Experience in customer service, audience management and marketing.
- Proven line management experience.
- Familiarity with reporting to grant makers and funding bodies.
- Knowledge of the opera sector, including a network of productive contacts within the industry.
- Experience working in the arts/charity sector.
- Experience with more advanced financial duties, including reporting and processes.



Turn of the Screw (2024)