



Cumbria
OPERA GROUP

2021 Festival of Opera

4th-11th September 2021

Education Pack for Schools

Registered charity no. 1183545

Our mission



Joe Davies, Artistic Director



Lucy Britton, Managing Director



Sula Cotterell, Secretary

The **Cumbria Opera Group** was founded in 2016 with the goal of bringing high-quality opera and classical music to Cumbria. Our annual productions are critically acclaimed and have demonstrated the appetite throughout Cumbria for opera and classical music. In 2017, the *Cumberland and Westmorland Herald* stated that the area was '**certainly the richer for such an event**'.

We're now planning our inaugural Opera Festival in September 2021, a week-long celebration of opera which has education and outreach at its heart. This will include appearances from Roderick Williams OBE, one of the best opera singers of his generation, and Joan Rodgers CBE, a native Cumbrian and our Artistic Patron.

In a time of severe government cuts to music and performing arts education, we believe it's more important than ever that young people have opportunities to participate in and learn about opera. To this end, from **July to December 2021** we will run **free** opera workshops in schools across Cumbria, as part of our educational initiative, *COGNitive Learning*. These will teach students techniques of singing, directing and stagecraft, as well as some of the history and modern relevance of opera. We will then make tickets to our productions freely available to students.

Our previous school workshops have been described as '**inspiring and memorable**' (Headteacher, Millom School). We hope to build on this across the county and give all young Cumbrians equal access to classical music. Through COGNitive Learning, we hope that we will inspire young people in Cumbria to see opera not as elitist, but as approachable, fascinating and relevant.

Our experience

Since 2016, the Cumbria Opera Group have staged three critically acclaimed operas and a concert of choral classics, and led a number of workshops in schools across the North of England. The Cumbria Opera Group was founded by young Cumbrians studying Music and Drama at University, and our team now includes experienced tutors and young professional performers. Outside Cumbria our team have worked in large scale productions in the West End and at the Royal Opera House, and it is this experience that we will bring to school workshops.



‘Superbly done’

The *Cumberland and Westmorland Herald*
review of *Acis and Galatea*, 2018

‘Penrith is certainly the richer for such an event’

The *Cumberland and Westmorland Herald*
review of *Venus and Adonis*, 2017



‘Choral music of the highest quality’

The *Cumberland and Westmorland Herald*
review of *Choral Classics*, 2019

Workshops

Opera sits at the intersection of drama and music, and as such, we will offer two workshop styles depending on the needs of each school. Each workshop will be an hour long and freely available to participating schools, as part of our remit to make opera accessible to all.

Our **Music** workshops will be led by Joe Davies, (BA in Music, St Peter's College Oxford) and our professional singers. For students aged 7-13, these workshops will centre on a popular operatic piece and will cover techniques of performance and general singing. For students aged 14-18, we will cover more in-depth singing technique and more complex music, to ensure that students of all ages have a fulfilling experience. The different age ranges for these workshops are designed to account for changing voices, ensuring that students will sing in their most comfortable range. Content covered in our Music workshops will fully support education curricula for all exam boards, teaching students performance techniques as well as specific information about opera.

Our **Drama** workshops will be led by Persia Babayan-Taylor (BA, Guildford School of Acting). In these workshops students will learn how to stage a chorus scene, working with tableaux and movement to compliment the music in the scene. Students will then use props to stage their own scene, to perform to staff and parents. These workshops tie in strongly with the GCSE and A level Drama curricula as students will gain experience devising drama and working with 21st century and historically informed techniques.



Our aims




We believe that the best way to learn about music and drama is through performance, and so our workshops will work alongside the taught curriculum to enhance the educational experience of students and give them a more well-rounded view of both music and drama. Our primary aim is that rural isolation should not be a barrier to young people becoming involved in the arts, and we hope that students will see our workshops as a launchpad for their own aspirations. To this end, we will invite all participating students to attend our productions and our open rehearsals in September 2021 **free of charge**.

Why your school should work with us

Practicing music in childhood has been linked to increased verbal ability and nonverbal reasoning (Forgeard et al., PLOS One (2008)), while listening to music is one of the best ways of combating mental health stimulating dopamine release (Salimpoor et al., Nature (2011)).

By working together to stage an opera scene, students will build teamwork skills and learn to quickly grasp unfamiliar material, particularly including text in European languages. By tying in with much of the curriculum, these workshops will provide a relevant and fulfilling introduction to opera, which we hope will help students unlock their creative potential.





If a workshop with the Cumbria Opera Group sounds like a great idea for your school we'd love to hear from you!

The core vision of the Cumbria Opera Group is that opera should be accessible to all, and we hope that students will leave our workshops having learned new skills while feeling confident and inspired to seek further performance opportunities.

If your school would like to get involved in the Festival or find out more about our workshops, please email Lucy at cumbriaoperagroup@gmail.com or visit our website at www.cumbriaoperagroup.com.

We can't wait to hear from you!

The Cumbria Opera Group