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• Candidate Pack

Appointment of Chair

Saxton Bampfyld

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Reference EBZOA





Opera North Appointment of Chair

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Making Opera Vital

Opera North creates
extraordinary experiences
every day, using music and
opera to entertain, engage,
challenge and inspire





Rosie Millard OBE
Deputy Chair
Opera North

Welcome Message

Welcome to the north of England's own opera company, Opera North, which for the last 50 years has been delighting the whole of the UK – but principally the North of England – with music. Not just grand opera, but operetta, musicals, chamber pieces, orchestral music, choral music, world premieres, electronic music and solo performances.

Opera North can be found in grand Victorian theatres, school halls, shopping centres and office blocks; across these venues, our mission remains clear: making opera vital and engaging everyone in great music. Our full time orchestra and chorus are joined by wonderful soloists; our award-winning Learning & Engagement department works with thousands of children and young people from low-income backgrounds; and our affordable tickets mean accessibility for a huge swathe of the population. Our wonderful Chair, Paul Lee, is stepping down, and so we have a vacancy.

You will be heading a garlanded company which is nationally and internationally respected, which has the energy and dynamism to be almost permanently on tour, and whose artistic elan is an inspiration and sets a formidable standard.

Our General Director, Laura Canning, leads a committed Senior Leadership Team and a talented staff team. I have been on the Board for seven years; it is a dynamic and exuberant group of people who love opera and who support and champion Opera North. We hope we can find a Chair who can lead us into our 50th anniversary season, to reflect and build on our half-century of success.

About

Opera North is a national opera company based in Leeds and is a leading UK arts organisation. Rooted in the North of England but international in outlook, Opera North creates extraordinary experiences every day.

Opera North's award-winning work tours to theatre stages and concert halls throughout the North and beyond, including to London and major international festivals, and we curate an eclectic artistic programme of gigs, concerts, spoken word and film in the Howard Assembly Room. The organisation's aim is to make bold, innovative, ambitious work and share it in new ways.

Opera North believes opera and music are for everyone, and champions diversity in artists, repertoire and audiences. The Learning & Engagement team works with people of all ages to create extraordinary experiences in their lives through participative arts and family performance activity; alongside its award-winning artistic work, Opera North provides free, high-quality music education for more than 3,300 children from low-income backgrounds every week.

At their Leeds home, Opera North runs the Howard Assembly Room auditorium, both as a venue for its eclectic artistic programme, but also as a commercial venue alongside the newly rebranded HAR Bar. Practice, rehearsal and recording spaces include the Linacre, Harewood and Mantle Studios and the Bramall Education Suite.

Opera North is grateful for the generous support of Arts Council England and Leeds City Council, sponsorship from the private sector, trusts and individuals, the Friends of Opera North, the Opera North Future Fund and the box office income from its audiences, which allow the organisation to continue to mount their award-winning work.



The Role

The Chair is responsible for providing strategic leadership to the Board of Trustees and ensuring that it governs the charity effectively, and in accordance with its vision, purpose and charitable objects.

The Chair acts as an ambassador for the charity with external stakeholders (e.g. Arts Council England and private donors) and regularly represents the charity at events, together with the General Director. The Chair works closely with the General Director, providing advice, support and challenge.

The Chair usually chairs the Nominations Committee, save on occasions where the Board is selecting a new Chair. The Chair will also attend various subcommittee meetings, primarily the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The Chair may also sit on the Board(s) of one or more of Opera North's related charities and/or subsidiary company.

Key Responsibilities include:

- Lead the Board in setting the strategic direction, vision and purpose of the Charity, ensuring these are reflected in all major decisions and policies.
- Act as a key ambassador and advocate for Opera North and the broader opera industry, promoting the Charity to key external stakeholders.
- Play an active role in the development and delivery of the philanthropic strategy and objectives, working closely with the Board and the Director of Development.
- Develop and maintain a positive and productive relationship with the General Director and Senior Leadership Team, supporting, challenging and holding them to account for operational, artistic and financial performance, effective risk management and safeguarding.
- Ensure robust governance arrangements are in place, fostering a culture of support, constructive challenge, transparency and collective responsibility among Trustees.

- Oversee Board effectiveness, including evaluation, development and succession planning, to ensure a co-operative, skilled and diverse Board, aligned with the Charity's needs.
- Lead on the appointment, appraisal and remuneration of the General Director.



Person Specification

Candidates should bring most of the following knowledge, skills, experience and attributes:

- A track record of senior leadership, with an understanding of governance gained through Chair, Trustee or non-executive roles, ideally in the arts or charitable sectors.
- An inclusive and diplomatic leadership style, with the ability to listen, support, and positively manage challenge.
- Excellent communication skills, and a commitment to spend time within the organisation, engaging with staff, artists, donors, and other stakeholders.
- Keen business acumen, and an openness to novel ideas.
- Knowledge of, and affinity for, opera, and for Opera North's mission to make opera vital and to be a leader in the evolution of the art form.
- Broad networks and a willingness to leverage them, with a view to enhancing our audience and fundraising base.
- Knowledge of, and affinity for, Leeds and/or our main touring cities (Manchester, Newcastle & Nottingham).
- Knowledge of the UK's arts funding model.
- Knowledge and experience of philanthropic giving, with an ability to cultivate relationships with public bodies and private donors.
- Political connections at local and/or national level.



Terms of Appointment

Term of office:

The charity's governing document does not specify terms of office for the Chair, but Trustees are appointed for terms of three years, for a maximum of three terms. The Chair term could therefore be for up to three three-year terms; however, the term can be agreed mutually between the Board and the incoming Chair before appointment.

Time commitment:

2–4 days per month, plus attendance at performances and events and relevant meetings with key stakeholders, such as funders and government officials.

This role is unremunerated but reasonable expenses will be paid.





How to Apply

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency adviser to Opera North on this appointment.

Candidates should apply for this role through our website at roles.saxbam.com using code **EBZOA**

Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload a CV and cover letter and complete the online equal opportunities monitoring form*. The closing date for applications is noon on Friday 29th May 2026

- The equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application. Please complete as part of the application process.

GDPR personal data notice

According to GDPR guidelines, we are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.

- **[Read our guide to writing cover letters.](#)**

opera north



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