



MANIFESTO

SWAP'ra - Supporting Women and Parents in Opera - was established in response to a collective frustration with the unconscious gender bias in the industry. The ultimate aim is to foster an environment in which a female CEO, Music Director, Artistic Director, Conductor, Composer or Librettist is no longer noteworthy.

The founders will address the gender imbalance in opera by encouraging best practice strategies for diversity and inclusivity, and effect industry-wide positive change by working to dismantle barriers for women and parents in leadership positions and senior artistic roles. Acting in an advisory capacity, SWAP'ra will work alongside a range of organisations to develop projects and schemes to further support or nurture female artistic talent.

The SWAP'ra campaign can be divided into four core pillars:

- Advocacy
- Mentoring
- Performance
- Support

ABOUT THE NAME

WHY WOMEN?

- Looking at the under-representation of women in leadership roles and top management jobs. Exploring the reasons for this imbalance and ways to encourage more opportunities for women in these roles.
- Championing female composers and librettists, and encouraging the programming of more of their work into the main house repertoire.

WHY PARENTS?

- Working with opera companies to find ways of updating their working practices to make a career in opera more accessible for people with families and dependents.
- Dismantling outdated attitudes towards the compatibility of parenthood and a career through celebration of the great many role model opera parents managing to do both.

ADVOCACY

SWAP'ra will work with opera houses, companies, festivals and artist agencies to implement changes to working practices in order to engender a more productive and egalitarian environment for everyone. We will also maintain a significant online presence to engage the public at a grass-roots level.

Short-term plans include:

- Featuring interviews, blogs and news items about or with inspirational women in order to celebrate female role models
- Running regular female-led Q&As and chaired discussions to continue the discourse
- Introducing advance rehearsal scheduling to enable easier childcare planning
- A 'Coaching Crèche' where parents share childcare during coaching and rehearsals

Long-term plans include:

- Growing a list of ambassadors comprising female and male industry-leaders who will further the campaign's reach
- Establishing more training opportunities for aspiring female Conductors and Directors
- Encouraging job-shares at all levels
- Establishing in-house crèches at the major opera houses for use by both full-time staff and guest artists

MENTORING

SWAP'ra will establish official mentoring schemes where experienced conductors, directors, designers, singers, agents, stage managers and others in the industry can offer support and advice to colleagues at the early stages of their careers. Drawing inspiration from the #MentorHer campaign, the scheme will particularly encourage men currently in senior positions to reach out to women in the hope that it eventually becomes commonplace for every artist - male or female - to share their craft with the next generation.

PERFORMANCE

There is a striking disparity between the number of male and female conductors and directors employed in the UK. SWAP'ra will provide performance opportunities for women to showcase wealth of operatic talent across the board and to encourage the major opera companies to actively pursue a more mindful approach to employment when it comes to the gender balance of their artistic seasons.

Female composers and librettists are also woefully under-represented in the major houses. Although we acknowledge that much of this is a reflection of historical bias, more can be done to accelerate the visibility of contemporary composers and librettists. SWAP'ra will address this by championing and providing a platform for the work of as many fantastic women as possible.

SUPPORT

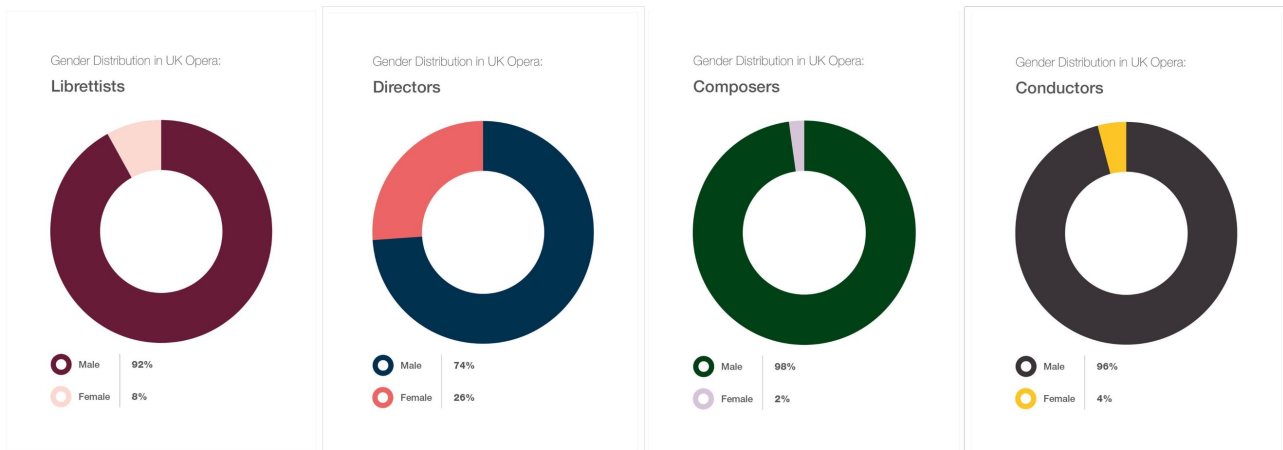
SWAP'ra aims to build a supportive community by sharing women's stories and achievements online in the form of interviews, blogs and posts on social media. We will also be able to point you in the direction of further support if you have concerns or problems that are outside the realms of our function.

Fundraising and sponsorship will enable SWAP'ra to establish an annual grant in support of new parents who would like to return to work after having a child or children. A self-employed woman is not entitled to Statutory Maternity Pay, making becoming a new mum an even greater financial challenge than it would be if she had been employed. Whilst it can be possible to receive Maternity Allowance, the rules surrounding returning to work post-childbirth are inflexible and often in-

validate an artist's claim. A bursary will be a small token to reduce the stress of paying for coaching, travelling to auditions or meetings, paying for new headshots, or whatever else is needed to get back to working after childbirth.

DATA

These charts show the female representation of conductors, directors, composers and librettists across the UK opera industry across the 2017 - 2018 seasons. The sample is small but the gender disparity is striking and serves as evidence that the status quo needs to be addressed. Of course the imbalance in the case of librettists and composers is representative of an historical trend but that is not to say that there isn't still room for change.



This data was kindly collated by Donna Lennard from the 2017-2018 season and includes English National Opera, Royal Opera House, Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera, Opera North, Glyndebourne, English Touring Opera, Garsington Opera, Grange Park Opera, Grange Festival, Opera Holland Park, Longborough Festival Opera, Wexford Festival Opera, Northern Ireland Opera, Mid-Wales Opera.

If you wish to see further breakdown of this data please get in touch.

EXTRA INFORMATION

Unfortunately at this time SWAP'ra is unable to investigate issues surrounding pay, harassment, and employment malpractice. If you are experiencing any of these issues we recommend that you contact your union representative.

equity.org.uk
musiciansunion.org.uk
bectu.org.uk
stagedirectorsuk.com