



supporting women and parents in opera

SWAP'ra

REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 1185454

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE PERIOD

2 MAY 2024 – 1 MAY 2025

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LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

CONSTITUTION

SWAP'ra is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (no. 1185454), registered with the Charity Commission on 23 September 2019 and is governed by its constitution dated 7 May 2018.

TRUSTEES

The Trustees serving during the period covered by this Report were as follows:

Sarah Holford (Chair)

Catherine Carby (Treasurer)

Professor Natasha Loges

Mary Miller

Sarah Noble

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Registered charity number 1185454

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE PERIOD

2 MAY 2023 – 1 MAY 2024

This document has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Charity Commission and complies with the Charity's governing document.

SWAP'ra is a registered charity, number 1185454. It is constituted as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and was registered with the Charity Commission on 23 September 2019.

TRUSTEES

Trustees are appointed with regard to the skills, knowledge and experience required for the effective administration of the CIO. Apart from the first Trustees, all Trustees are appointed for a term of three years which may be renewed.

AIM AND PURPOSES

The charitable objects of SWAP'ra, as described in the constitution, are:

- 1) The promotion – for the public benefit – of equality and diversity in the opera industry, and the elimination of discrimination on the grounds of gender or parenthood in particular, but not exclusively, by:
 - a) Advancing education in and raising awareness to issues of equality and diversity.
 - b) Promoting a culture in favour of equality and diversity throughout the opera industry
 - c) Conducting or commissioning research on equality and diversity issues in opera and making the conclusions available to the public.
 - d) Promoting and supporting projects to facilitate the elimination of discrimination on the grounds of gender or parenthood in opera.
 - e) Supporting women and parents working in opera including by way of grants, advice, counselling, mentoring or otherwise as the trustees see fit.



- 2) To further such charitable purpose or purposes as the trustees in their absolute discretion shall think fit.

BACKGROUND - WHY ARE WE HERE?

SWAP'ra is a group of artists and creative professionals who have come together to build a supportive community to effect positive change for women and parents in opera.

The aim is to be a voice for women (including trans and non-binary people) and parents of all genders in opera by:

- Celebrating professional achievements in an industry where women are under-represented in many areas;
- Advocating for working conditions that better accommodate family and parenting commitments;
- Challenging preconceptions to improve attitudes towards women and parents in the arts Providing a friendly and non-judgmental community that offers peer support together with a forum to explore practical issues;
- Developing a platform for performance and publicity;
- Responding to the impact and implications of Covid 19 both in the short and longer term especially in the context of the ongoing challenges for women and parents in opera.

The ultimate aim is to foster an environment in which women and parents are enabled to thrive professionally; the balancing of career and family/parenting commitments is actively supported by companies; and a female CEO, Music Director, Artistic Director, Conductor, Composer or Librettist is no longer noteworthy.

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

SWAP'ra had its beginnings at the end of 2017, when a group of artists active in the opera industry met to discuss how they could constructively address the challenges and barriers that women and parents working in opera continue to battle against.

This is not a new conversation for those affected by these issues. But the aim is to raise the volume and to bring these conversations to the attention of those in positions to effect positive change.



The SWAP'ra Senior Management Team is made up of artists with portfolio careers including singers, directors, teachers and educators, producers, company directors, instrumentalists and arts managers. Together the team has a broad range of experience and expertise working across the UK and internationally and as such is in a strong position to act as a conduit between freelance artists and building-based arts managers.

SWAP'ra launched in the summer of 2018 with a spectacular Gala at Holland Park, hosted by Fiona Shaw and showcasing the talents, both on and off-stage, of 150 female directors, instrumentalists, conductors, singers, stage managers, composers, librettists and project managers. Named by Fiona Maddocks in The Guardian as one of the best classical music events of 2018, the Gala struck a significant chord for many. The response to the launch, and the funds raised (over £15,000) enabled SWAP'ra to submit its application to the Charity Commission soon after, and, as noted above, the organisation was registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (1185454) in September 2019.

WHAT DO WE WANT THE FUTURE TO LOOK LIKE?

Our vision is that women are evenly represented in all job roles within the opera industry.

- Younger artists at the beginning of their careers don't feel they have to choose between professional success and parenthood.
- Artists of all genders aren't afraid for their careers when they move between life stages (such as pregnancy, adoption, IVF, menopause, ageing) but have the support they need to consider their options.
- There is a widespread culture of respect and support for women and parents within the industry, as a result of the correction of unconscious biases.
- It is normal for those in the industry to experience working conditions that accommodate family life.

To achieve this vision, our programme focuses around three key pillars of activity:

Performance | Mentoring & Peer Support | Advocacy & Research

PROGRAMME AND ACTIVITIES 2024/25

SWAP'ra RETREAT - Mentoring & Peer Support

This financial year saw the development of a new project partnership with Britten Pears Arts and the delivery of our second SWAP'ra Retreat. The SWAP'ra Retreat 2025 was a development of our inaugural retreat at Glyndebourne in 2023. It is a fully funded, intensive residential career development opportunity for eight singing mothers with children under 4 years old. It took place over 5 days (3rd-7th March) at Snape Maltings in Suffolk.

The Retreat is a key delivery mechanism for SWAP'ra's objective to provide mentoring and peer support to women and parents in opera. Through sustained access to experienced industry professionals, structured one-to-one guidance, and facilitated peer exchange, participants receive both formal mentoring and the opportunity to build enduring peer support networks that extend beyond the residential period.

During the five-day programme, postnatal singers received:

- Performance psychology coaching (both one-on-one and group sessions)
- Group and one-to-one pilates with a focus on post-natal core strength rehabilitation
- One-on-one vocal coaching
- Group masterclasses led by expert vocal and acting coaches
- Vocal massage and vocal health workshop
- Professional video recordings of two new audition arias
- Discussions and network-building with parents with similar lived experiences

Outcomes includes:

- Professional skill development
- Increased physical and emotional wellbeing
- Renewed confidence - feeling able to promote themselves for professional opportunities
- Peer networks - a friendly, safe and non-judgmental community
- Otherwise unaffordable digital publicity and promotion resources, essential to artists today

Facilitators for 2025 were:

- Olivia Fuchs - Stage Director
- Gillian Ramm - Voice Teacher and Vocal Health Coach
- Hannah Sandison - Performance Psychology Consultant
- Kate Valentine - Vocal Massage and Health Therapist
- Denni Sayers - pilates instructor and movement director
- Frances Hills - pianist and vocal coach
- Alice Turner - pianist and vocal coach
- Jan Capinski - videographer

In response to feedback gathered from participants in 2023, we decided to extend the course from four to five days to ensure longer gaps between scheduled activities. This also enabled us to offer an additional two places for 2025, increasing the total number of participants from six to eight.

BPA was an ideal partner for this project. The organisation has been holding residential courses for composers for several years so have robust but flexible systems and resources in place to support the SWAP'ra Retreat. In addition to providing the spaces we need to deliver each activity, BPA provided accommodation and catering for facilitators and participants as support-in-kind, as well as a budget for facilitator fee contribution, participants' travel expenses, and a contribution to childcare costs for those who need it. SWAP'ra and BPA are keen to collaborate further and are already in discussions about future Retreats at Snape Maltings.

Anonymous participant feedback included the following:

'What the SWAP'ra retreat offers to parents is essential. Without their support, I wouldn't have been able to recognise or even articulate how much help I needed. The impact on my life, on the lives of others and (as a result) on the industry as a whole cannot be underestimated. What an invaluable resource that deserves to be cherished and celebrated.'

'This retreat was a turning point for me in my career post-parenthood. It came at a time when PTSD related performance anxiety had reached an all time high (something that I had never experienced pre-children!) and it nurtured me in ways I couldn't have anticipated... I came away with renewed self-belief, a new support group of fellow singing parents with shared experiences, and a rediscovered passion for singing. I'll be forever grateful to SWAP'ra for offering me this invaluable opportunity and support when I needed it the most.'

PERFORMANCE PSYCHOLOGY - Mentoring & Peer Support

As part of the SWAP'ra team, Hannah Sandison combines her experience as a singer with her expertise as a performance psychology consultant to support artists through one-to-one coaching. Her work looks at issues including career stagnation, performance anxiety, and motivation paralysis. To champion accessibility, Hannah offers two monthly pro-bono sessions to women referred by SWAP'ra, providing professional guidance to those who might otherwise be unable to access it.

This provision directly advances our charitable objective of offering mentoring and peer support by creating structured, confidential space for reflection and professional development, particularly at moments of vulnerability or transition. In addition to the individual benefit for participants, insights from this work inform our wider understanding of the pressures facing women and parents in opera, enabling us to strengthen our peer networks and ensure that our mentoring activity remains responsive, relevant, and rooted in lived experience.

PRESS AND COMMUNICATIONS - Advocacy

Press interviews and podcast appearances have continued to play an important role in advancing our advocacy objectives. By contributing to features in sector publications (Classical Music Magazine) and participating in industry-focused podcasts (National Opera Studio), we have been able to raise awareness of the structural barriers facing women and parents in opera, highlight lived experiences, and promote practical recommendations for change. These platforms enable us to reach artistic leaders, administrators, policymakers, and practitioners across the opera sector, strengthening our voice within industry debates and positioning SWAP'ra as a constructive, solutions-focused advocate for equity, transparency, and sustainable working practices.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

The period of this report covers the period 2 May 2024 – 1 May 2025. Accounts are prepared on a cash basis.

The charity's opening balance of £4,013 comprised £3,541 unrestricted and £472 restricted funds. Income in this financial year comprised £738 unrestricted funds and £22,594 restricted to costs associated with the SWAP'ra Retreat (March 2025). Total expenditure was £17,524, £150 of which was spent on office expenses from unrestricted funds. Total remaining funds at year end are £9,821, £5,692 of which are restricted.

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS

These accounts have been prepared on a cash basis, under the receipts and payments method, and are presented on the Charity Commission template. Receipts and payments accounts contain a summary of money received and spent during the period and a list of assets and liabilities at the end of the period.

RESERVES POLICY

The Trustees' policy is to hold surplus unrestricted funds as reserves to safeguard the Charity's ongoing financial sustainability and to provide support for future projects.



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

SWAP'ra (Supporting Women and Parents in Opera)

1185454

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Receipts and payments accounts

For the period from	2 May 24	To	1 May 25
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Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Donations from individuals	623	6,494		7,117	-
Donations from Trusts & Foundations		10,500		10,500	-
Income from project partners		5,600		5,600	-
GiftAid	114			114	-
				-	-
				-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	738	22,594	-	23,332	-
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	738	22,594	-	23,332	-
A3 Payments					
SWAP'ra Retreat fees		13,577		13,577	2,550
Communications		198		198	436
Insurance		225		225	193
Other	35			35	35
Office expenses	115			115	-
Travel, accommodation (SWAP'ra Retreat)		3,374		3,374	-
				-	-
				-	-
				-	-
Sub total	150	17,374	-	17,524	3,214
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	150	17,374	-	17,524	3,214
Net of receipts/(payments)	588	5,220	-	5,808	- 3,214
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	3,541	472	-	4,013	7,227
Cash funds this year end	4,129	5,692	-	9,821	4,013

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds				
	Metro bank	84	2,702	-
	Co-Op bank	3,018	1,835	-
	PayPal	1,027	1,156	-
	Total cash funds	4,129	5,692	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account (s))	OK	OK	OK
	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-

	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-

B3 Investment assets

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

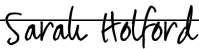
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

B5 Liabilities

Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

DocuSigned by:

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Signature

Print Name

Date of approval

Sarah Holford

10 February 2026