

# USC Thornton

## **Opera Program Learning Objectives & Goals 2023-2024 Academic Year**

### **INTRODUCTION & CONDITIONS OF ACCEPTANCE**

This document sets forth the learning objectives and goals of the USC Thornton School of Music Opera Program. A working knowledge of the values, expectations and requirements that support these objectives and goals is required of all participants. Acceptance of and adherence to them is a condition of participation in the program.

### **PROGRAM PROFILE**

The Thornton Opera Program provides instruction for undergraduate and graduate participants as they prepare for careers in opera. It is part of the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music, a professional school dedicated to educating and training students in all aspects of music within the context of an excellent liberal arts education. The USC Opera Program is recognized as one of the top operatic training programs in the nation because of the excellence of its faculty and students while at USC and as alumni and professionals in the opera field. It is the intention of the Opera Program faculty and staff to support our students as we strive for excellence and build upon this reputation.

### **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

The Thornton Opera Program mounts two fully staged productions with orchestra each year, plus a program of Opera Scenes with piano. In addition to the faculty Music Director and Stage Director, and the Opera Program Manager, the program engages professional coaches, designers, stage management, and production crew to support the student experience. Auditions are held each year at the start of classes to determine casting for the year. The opera faculty make every effort to choose repertoire that will provide appropriate roles for all vocal arts majors who audition, with priority given to those in graduate degrees. Repertoire presented ranges from 17th Century works to world premieres.

## PROGRAM LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

- Knowledge of how to prepare a role.
- Mastery of the operatic languages.
- Deepening of musical skills, especially those related to singing in staged works.
- Vocal development and discovery.
- Performance skill in acting, movement, and character development.
- Stagecraft
- Teamwork
- Professional rehearsal decorum and protocols.
- Self-confidence as a performer.

## STATEMENT OF VALUES

The Opera Program students, faculty, and staff are expected to pursue collaboration based on the University's unifying values, which are:

- **Integrity:** Our words, decisions and actions align with and are guided by our values, honesty and ethical principles.
- **Well-being:** We create a caring culture that fosters our ability to thrive in mind, body, and spirit as essential to the sustainable pursuit of USC's mission.
- **Excellence:** We strive to better ourselves as a learning community, our institution and society through assessment, reflection, learning, innovation, research and collaboration.
- **Open Communication:** We actively listen and communicate in a clear, honest, timely and accessible manner and provide opportunities for safe, respectful dialogue and interaction.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** We challenge our community to engage differences as strengths, embrace the richness of our lived experiences, and leverage diversity, equity and inclusion to drive excellence in support of a welcoming community where all can thrive, and discrimination is not tolerated.
- **Accountability:** At all levels of the university, we set clear expectations and take responsibility for our actions, decisions, outcomes and consequences.

## EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Opera students, faculty and staff are expected to align with the values listed above and to strive to better themselves while being guided by honest and ethical principles. With this in mind, the following accountabilities apply.

- Cast members will be accountable for familiarizing themselves with the opera they are cast in and reviewing the entire text of their role before their first coaching/rehearsal.
- Singers will complete a thorough study of diction and translation of the text for every scene they perform in.

- Singers will be off-book as soon as they are able. The target deadline is to be off-book on a given scene at the first staging rehearsal of that scene.
- Opera students, faculty, and staff will arrive promptly to activities for which they are called. Arriving early to a call ensuring they are properly attired and prepared at the start time is expected professional behavior.
- Opera students, faculty, and staff commit to resolving scheduling conflicts promptly through open communication. The closer it gets to the tech and performance weeks, it becomes more important that students, faculty, staff and crew attend as many of their calls as possible. The Opera Program will never demand that a student performer miss a class they are enrolled in. However, through collaborative discussion with faculty for classes that conflict with vital opera calls - Sitzprobes, Wandelprobes, Dress Rehearsals, Performances - the Opera Program will seek to secure releases from conflicting classes so that the performer can attend. See ADDENDUM A below for detailed information about the scheduling process.
- **Rehearsal Clothing Requirements:** Bring shoes that can stretch, jump, dance, and function for staging. NO FLIP-FLOPS, OPEN-TOED OR HIGH HEEL SHOES WILL BE ALLOWED IN STAGING AND TECHNICAL REHEARSALS. Cast members will be sent to their dorm/home to get proper shoes if they show up improperly attired. Bare feet are not acceptable as the floor of the rehearsal hall is generally filthy and has all manner of detritus. Cast members must wear clothing that they are comfortable in: jeans, tennis shoes, character shoes, t-shirts, sweatshirts, sweatpants, etc. are appropriate. If they come to school that day required to dress in more formal attire then they must bring alternative rehearsal clothing to change into.

## WELL BEING

Opera Program students, faculty, and staff should care for their physical and mental well being. A healthy diet, good hydration, exercise, and **especially adequate sleep** are essential to an opera artist's ability to perform at a high level. Achieving these can be difficult with a demanding academic schedule and a student community that often does not prioritize selfcare. The University provides many resources for students, faculty, and staff to help with selfcare. They are listed below.

## UNIVERSITY STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC CONDUCT AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Please familiarize yourselves with the [USC Student Handbook](#), which details your rights, responsibilities, and obligations as a student member of this community.

### **Academic Integrity:**

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, comprises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the student handbook or the Office of Academic Integrity's website, and university policies on Research and Scholarship Misconduct.

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

### **Students and Disability Accommodations:**

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at [osas.usc.edu](http://osas.usc.edu). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto:osasfrontdesk@usc.edu).

## **SUPPORT SYSTEMS**

### **USC Office of the Ombuds**

( 213) 821-9556

[upcombuds@usc.edu](mailto:upcombuds@usc.edu)

<https://ombuds.usc.edu/what-we-do/>

All interactions with the University Ombuds are confidential. An Ombuds person will:

- Listen to the issue or concern of any student, staff or faculty member
- Provide a neutral perspective
- Brainstorm possible paths through the conflict
- Develop and weigh strategies to address the concerns
- Identify relevant policies and resources that might be helpful to you
- Offer conflict management and coaching as you explore next steps

### **USC Student Life**

USC Student Life is devoted to supporting, educating, and engaging students. We are focused on providing all students the opportunity to reach their educational, personal, and professional aspirations.

### **Trojans Care for Trojans**

USC Trojans Care for Trojans (TC4T) is an initiative within the Office of Campus Wellbeing and Crisis Intervention that empowers USC students, faculty and staff to take action when they are concerned about a fellow Trojan challenged with personal difficulties. This private and anonymous request form provides an opportunity for Trojans to help a member of our Trojan Family.

### **Counseling and Mental Health** - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

### **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline** - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

### **Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP)** - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

**Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX)** - (213) 740-5086

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

**Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment** - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

**The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS)** - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

**USC Campus Support and Intervention** - (213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion** - (213) 740-2101

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

**USC Emergency** - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

**USC Department of Public Safety** - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

**Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice** - (323) 442-2850 or [otfp@med.usc.edu](mailto:otfp@med.usc.edu)

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

## ADDENDUM A

### THE USC OPERA PROGRAM SCHEDULING PROCESS

Every organization producing live theatrical presentations has its own process for scheduling. Here is the process the USC Thornton Opera uses.

#### **Normal Rehearsal Periods:**

The Opera Program's general weekly rehearsal times are Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 4pm to 10pm. An hour dinner break is provided around 6pm or 7pm. Thursday rehearsals are called only for specific events like the Opera Scenes dress rehearsal in February and during a full production's tech week. Some shows will also have performances on Thursday nights. Saturday and Sunday calls are rare except for tech week and performances. Tech and performance weeks frequently have student, faculty, staff and crew calls each day. See the Opera Office website - <https://music.usc.edu/opera/office/> - for a semester week-by-week calendar with more tech and performance schedule information.

#### **The Scheduling Process:**

1. Cast members submit their online Weekly Availability forms via this FormDesk link: [https://fd2.formdesk.com/uscopera/weekly\\_availability\\_form](https://fd2.formdesk.com/uscopera/weekly_availability_form). These submissions will be reviewed by the Opera Office and Faculty to identify potential scheduling conflicts. Meetings with each cast member with significant weekly conflicts will be scheduled to begin the process of collaboratively managing schedule conflicts.
2. Cast members submit their one-time excused absence requests using the Excused Absence Request form via this FormDesk link: [https://fd2.formdesk.com/uscopera/excused\\_absence\\_form](https://fd2.formdesk.com/uscopera/excused_absence_form). These requests can be submitted throughout the semester until 3-weeks prior to opening night. After that date excused absences should be presented directly to the Opera Office via email or in-person meeting.
3. The weekly availability and excused absence forms are locked at 5pm each Wednesday for the scheduling process to occur. Both open up again on Thursdays at 5pm. Entries made after that time are considered for the week following the week that has just been scheduled.
4. The weekly opera program schedules are prepared on Thursdays and sent out via email to all performers, faculty, and staff. Often, conflicts and mistakes are discovered. Do not hesitate to contact the Opera Office about any conflicts or questions via email; [uscopera@usc.edu](mailto:uscopera@usc.edu), or text message to 213-320-6772.
5. Changes, as they are developed with students, faculty, and staff, are highlighted in the weekly schedules. As updated versions are created they will be redistributed to the affected parties via email and text messages. Also, printouts of updated schedules will be posted on the Opera Call Boards outside MUS 105 and the Opera Office MUS 212.
6. A week-to-week calendar listing for each semester and production is posted on the Opera Call Boards and on the Opera Office website: <https://music.usc.edu/opera/office/>. Opera students, faculty, and staff should familiarize themselves with this document.

7. If a student, faculty, or staff member is unable to attend a call for any reason it is that person's responsibility to notify the instructor, coach, and pianist that they are unable to attend. They can also reach out to the Opera Office via phone; 213-740-6451 or text; 213-320-6772. However the Opera Office officially closes at 6pm Monday-Friday and is not open on the weekends. Sheets with contact information for Opera Program students, faculty, and staff are available upon request.

The Opera Program will work hard to accommodate a participant's conflicts with other USC classes and instructional obligations. However, it is the participant's responsibility to communicate the conflicts to both the Opera Program and the affected non-opera faculty. The Opera Program will honor all of a participant's required courses, which must be communicated in the beginning of the rehearsal period. However we may request that a student be released from a class when it might conflict with orchestra rehearsals, sitzprobes, technical rehearsals, dress rehearsals, and performances. The Opera Manager can write a memo to impacted non-opera faculty in support of any requests for absence.

***Scheduling is an art, not a science.  
Let's make schedule art together!***