

Ferrier Operatic Society

CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

Ferrier Operatic Society is not a regulatory body and does not undertake regulated activity for a regulated activity provider (ie a local authority or local education authority). It is, therefore, not required to seek Criminal Records Bureau checks for its members or helpers.

Ferrier Operatic Society can be contacted via its website: www.ferrieroperatic.co.uk.

Responsibilities of the Society

At the outset of any production involving children the Society will:

- undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process;
- ensure the child is supervised at all times;
- assess whether the child requires a Performance Licence under the Children (Performances) Regulations 1968 and advise parents to ascertain such a Licence;
- assess whether Licenced Chaperones are required under the Children (Performances) Regulations 1968 and recruit as necessary;
- recruit a team of responsible adults who will supervise children at all times during the performance;
- know how to get in touch with the local authority social services, if a concern is deemed to need to be reported;
- ensure all employees, supervising adults and members of the Society are able to access a copy of its child protection policy and procedures and that there is access to a copy during rehearsals and performances.

Parents

- The Society attaches importance to building a partnership between parents and the Society.
- Parents are encouraged to be involved in the activities of the Society and to share responsibility for the care of the children.
- All parents will be issued with guidance which will briefly explain the care Ferrier Operatic Society will take of their child; membership and performance fees; rehearsal and performance schedules; delivery and collection of children to and from rehearsals and performances; a telephone number to contact one of the Committee in case of emergencies; and will be asked to complete an Information and Permissions Form.
- All parents will be made aware of how to access a full copy of the Society's Child Protection Policy and procedures.
- It is NOT the responsibility of the Society to bring a child to rehearsals/performances or take a child home. All parents should bring/collect their child to/from rehearsals and performances (at the stage door). Parents can arrange for another person to bring/collect the child but such collection arrangements should be made known to Ferrier Operatic Society's Committee.
- All parents will provide information about the child which can be retained for contact and emergency purposes. This will include a contact name, telephone number, e-mail address and health declaration.

Unsupervised Contact

- The Society will attempt to ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children.
- If possible, there will always be two adults in the room when working with children.
- If unsupervised contact is unavoidable, steps will be taken to minimize risk. For example, work will take place in a public area or in a designated room with an open door.

Physical Contact

- All adults will maintain a safe and appropriate distance from children.
- Adults will only touch children when it is absolutely necessary in relation to the particular activity.
- Adults will seek the consent of the child prior to any physical contact and the purpose of the contact shall be made clear.

Managing sensitive information

- The Society will ensure confidentiality of any personal detail held within its records – ie names, addresses, telephone numbers etc.
- The Society will seek permission to include the child's name for promotional purposes – ie the specific production's official programme and production details on its website.
- The Society may wish to take passport-type photographs of the children for health and safety identification purposes on individual contact records.
- The Society may wish to take, use and store photographs or images of the children for the purpose of the specific production either for its historic records or for promotional purposes.
- Permission will be sought from parents for use of photographic material featuring children for promotional purposes – within the production's official programme, at the theatre or on its website.
- The Society's web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use.

Suspicion of child abuse

- If you see or suspect abuse of a child while in the care of the Society, please make this known to any of Ferrier Operatic Society's Committee who has a collective and individual responsibility.
- Please make a note, for your own records, of what you witnessed as well as your response, in case there is a follow-up investigation in which you are involved.
- If a serious allegation is made against any member of the Society, employee, chaperone/supervising adult, venue staff etc, that individual will be cautioned immediately and an investigation will be undertaken. The Committee will ensure that, where possible, any such individual will, at least, not have unsupervised contact with the child/children in question or, at best, have no contact with the child/children in question. Neither will any such individual have unsupervised contact with any other children in the production until the investigation is concluded and appropriate action taken.

Disclosure of child abuse

If a child confides in you that abuse has taken place:

- remain calm and in control but do not delay taking action;
- listen carefully to what the child says;

- allow the child to tell you at their own pace and ask questions only for clarification;
- don't ask questions that suggest a particular answer;
- don't promise to keep it a secret;
- use the first opportunity you have to share the information with a member of Ferrier Operatic Society's Committee who has a collective and individual responsibility for child protection.

Make it clear to the child that you will need to:

- share this information with others;
- make it clear that you will only tell the people who need to know and who should be able to help;
- reassure the child that 'they did the right thing' in telling someone;
- tell the child what you are going to do next.

What to do next:

Immediately speak to a member of Ferrier Operatic Society's Committee who has a collective and individual responsibility for child protection. It will then be their responsibility to investigate the matter fully and decide a course of action. Where it is deemed necessary, the Committee will liaise with the relevant authorities, for example social services or the police.

As soon as possible after the disclosing conversation, make a note of what was said, using the child's own words. Note the date, time, any names that were involved or mentioned, and who you gave the information to. Make sure you sign and date your record.

Recording

In all situations, including those in which the cause of concern arises from a disclosure made in confidence, the details of an allegation or reported incident will be recorded, regardless of whether or not the concerns have been shared with a statutory child protection agency.

An accurate note shall be made of:

- the date and time of the incident or disclosure;
- the parties involved;
- what was said or done and by whom;
- any action taken to investigate the matter;
- any further action taken eg suspension of an individual;
- where relevant, the reasons why the matter was not referred to a statutory agency;
- the name of the person reporting and to whom it was reported;

The record will be stored securely and shared only with those who need to know about the incident or allegation.

Rights & Confidentiality

If a child abuse complaint is made against a member of the Society or its employee/helper, he/ she will be privately (not publicly) cautioned immediately, be made aware of his/her right to confidentiality, and given an opportunity to record his/her views about the accusation before an investigation is undertaken.

No matter how you may feel about the accusation, both the alleged abuser and the child who is thought to have been abused have the right to confidentiality under the Data Protection Act 1998. Remember also that any possible criminal investigation could be compromised through inappropriate information being released.

In criminal law, the Crown or other prosecuting authority has to prove guilt. All parties are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Accidents

To avoid accidents, members, employees, chaperones/supervising adults and children will be advised of "house rules" regarding health and safety issues and will be notified of areas that are out of bounds. Responsibility for health and safety at the theatre is the Stage Manager.

Children will be advised of the clothing and footwear appropriate to the work that will be undertaken.

As in the case of adult members of the Society, if a child is injured while in the care of the Society, a designated first-aider will administer first aid. The first-aider will record the injury in the Company's accident book and the record will be counter-signed by the designated responsible person at the time of the accident - ie a member of the Committee, musical director, director or stage manager at the time of the accident.

If a child attends a rehearsal or performance with an obvious physical injury, a record of this will be made in the accident book. This record will be counter-signed by a member of the Committee (or other designated responsible person at the time). This record can be useful if a formal allegation is made later, and will also be a record that the child did not sustain the injury while participating in the production.

Licensed Chaperones

Where it is assessed that a child requires a Performance Licence under the Children (Performances) Regulations 1968 the Society will advise the parent to ascertain such a License.

Where it is assessed that a child requires a Performance Licence then the Society will recruit/appoint Licenced Chaperones, as legally required, for their care during the production process.

The chaperone is licensed by their local authority and is subject to an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check and provides child protection training and briefing.

By law:

The chaperone acts *in loco parentis* and exercises the care which a good parent might be reasonably expected to give to a child. They will be made aware of the Company's Child Protection Policy and Procedures. The maximum number of children in the chaperone's care shall not exceed 12.

In addition to being licensed by the local authority, potential chaperones will be required to supply:

- photographic proof of identity (e.g. passport, driving licence)
- two references from individuals with knowledge of their previous work with children, unless already well-known by the Society.

- will be asked to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be considered unsuitable to work with children.

Supervision of children during the production process

Where Licenced Chaperones are not required, a team of responsible adults will supervise the children whose first responsibility is to the child in their care.

During rehearsals away from the theatre, this will be the members of the Society, many of whom have already undertaken CRB checks for other purposes (ie their employment and work for voluntary organizations).

During the performance at the theatre a team of responsible adults will be appointed to supervise the children at all times back stage.

Conditions for the children

The Chaperones/team of responsible adults at the theatre should not be performing any other duties: their first responsibility is to the child in their care.

Licenced Chaperones will have received training and briefing from their local authority and will be aware of their responsibilities and duties, some of which are set out below. The team of supervising adults will be required to carry out similar duties. The use of the word Chaperone also refers to supervising adults:

- Where they are not satisfied with the conditions for the children, they should bring this to the attention of the director or stage manager.
- If changes cannot be made satisfactorily, the chaperone should consider not allowing the child to continue.
- If a chaperone considers that a child is unwell or too tired to continue, the chaperone must inform the director or stage manager and not allow the child to continue.
- Under the Dangerous Performances Act no child of compulsory school age is permitted to do anything which may endanger life or limb. This could include working on wires or heavy lifting. Chaperones should tell the director or stage manager to cease using children in this way, and should contact the local authority.
- During performances, chaperones will be responsible for meeting children at the stage door and signing them into the building.
- Children will be kept together at all times except when using separate dressing rooms.
- Chaperones will be aware of where the children are at all times.
- Children are not to leave the theatre unsupervised by chaperones unless in the company of their parent/guardian.
- Children will be adequately supervised while going to and from the toilets.

- Children will not be allowed to enter the adult dressing rooms.
- Chaperones should be aware of the safety arrangements and first aid procedures in the venue, and will ensure that children in their care do not place themselves and others in danger.
- Chaperones should ensure that any accidents are reported to a member of the Committee and recorded in its accident book.
- Chaperones should examine accident books each day. If a significant accident has occurred, the director or stage manager is not allowed to use that child until a medically qualified opinion has been obtained (not just the word of the parent or child).
- Chaperones should have written arrangements for children after performances. If someone different is to collect the child, parents should let chaperones have written confirmation of the change in advance, otherwise a telephone call should be made to the parent to confirm the arrangements.
- Children should be signed out when leaving and a record made of the person collecting.
- If a parent has not collected the child, it is the duty of the chaperone to contact the parent and stay with that child until the parent/guardian arrives to collect. The chaperone is not allowed to transport the child to its home.
- Chaperones will be given a copy of the Society's Child Protection policies and procedures which they should have access to during each performance.

The Committee, Ferrier Operatic Society

2 February 2011