



Presented by the *Black British Classical Foundation* in collaboration with *Welsh National Opera*, this competition showcases the Commonwealth's finest Black and South Asian singers as they launch their international operatic careers. Up to twenty singers will be shortlisted and brought to the UK in November 2022. After a series of Preliminary Rounds, five singers will be chosen to perform a twenty-minute programme (with orchestra and piano) in the Final at *Birmingham Town Hall* on 5th December 2022. The Chair of the judging panel will be celebrated British Bass, Sir Willard White. After the competition, the winner of the Samuel Coleridge Taylor Award will perform a specifically commissioned song cycle (and a guaranteed three performances) with the *Birmingham Contemporary Music Group*.

The Voice of Black Opera (VOBO) Competition 2022

Eligibility Criteria

- Professional singers of Black or South Asian origin/heritage and holding a passport from one of the 54 Commonwealth member states.
- A minimum age limit of 20 years on 5th December 2022.
- Required to be available for competition commitments in Birmingham from 20th November to 6th December, with the Final at Birmingham Town Hall on 5th December 2022.

N.B. Applicants must ensure they have the right to travel to/from and to remain in the UK for the purposes of competing in this competition and are responsible for meeting any Covid requirements current at time of travel.

Prizes

Sir Willard White Trophy

- £10,000 (subject to UK taxation)
- Repertoire coaching with music staff at WNO*
- A concert appearance with the WNO Orchestra*

Samuel Coleridge Taylor Award

- £5,000 (subject to UK taxation)
- A specifically commissioned new work for voice and ensemble (with a guaranteed three performances) with The Birmingham Contemporary Music Group*
- This award will be presented to the singer who, in the Judges' opinion, gives the best performance of a contemporary song by a Black or South Asian Composer.

**The BBCF is not responsible for any expenses incurred*

Finalists

- Designed by Birmingham City University School of Fashion & Textiles, the five finalists will be fitted with a bespoke fashion item to wear at the Final.
- Finalists will also sing a duet with a leading operatic singer (TBA) as part of their 20-minute programme (preferred duet repertoire must be detailed at the point of application).

Non-finalists

- The fifteen non-finalists will be invited to perform in a public Masterclass with a leading operatic singer (TBA) and to attend personal development workshops.
- Non-finalists are also invited to attend the Final at Birmingham Town Hall, and to prepare a group song/spiritual or chorus that will be sung before the announcement of the winners.

Application requirements

All applicants must fill in the **application form** at the following link <https://forms.office.com/r/E60mjBVmNL>, to include a short biography and repertoire choices for the Preliminary Round and the Final. Singers with **specific access requirements** should indicate this with their initial application. Please also email the following supporting documentation to competitionmanager@bbcf.uk :

- **A photo/scan of current passport** showing photo, nationality & date of birth. Please note, your passport must be valid for six months after 6th December 2022.
- **A letter of recommendation** from a singing teacher, conservatoire, or opera house with whom you have recently worked. If the letter is not in English, you must provide an English translation.
- **A completed measurements chart & full-length photo** for the Birmingham City University School of Fashion and Textiles students to design a bespoke fashion item for the finalists. This chart is available on the Black British Classical Foundation website.
- **A link to audition video** recorded within the last eighteen months. We recommend uploading your unedited video onto YouTube and sending the unpublished link. Recorded audition repertoire should include:
 - Two Operatic Arias (contrasting in style and language)
 - One Classical Song from the Western tradition, sung in the original language

The audition committee will hear all applications submitted online and make their assessments based on the following criteria: vocal quality, technical skill, musical and linguistic presentation, attention to text, artistic personality and potential as future operatic performers. **The deadline for applicants wishing to enter the competition is Midnight (GMT time zone), Monday 25th April 2022.** From these applicants, up to twenty singers will be shortlisted for the Preliminary Rounds in November 2022 to perform their initial audition pieces, plus a contemporary song by a Black or South Asian Composer at one of three public concerts in Birmingham, accompanied on the piano by one of the Competition's official accompanists. From those singers, five Finalists will be selected for the Final on Monday 5th December 2022 (plus one singer in reserve). **Applicants will be notified whether they have been shortlisted for the Preliminary Round by Monday 2nd May 2022.**

Enquiries should be emailed to the Black British Classical Foundation at:

competitionmanager@bbcf.uk The final will take place at Birmingham Town Hall on Monday 5th December 2022, with prior coaching sessions and rehearsals, and will include a mixed programme of songs and opera accompanied by the WNO Orchestra (conductor TBA).

Repertoire Choices - please submit all your programmes at time of application

Preliminary Round in November: A programme of up to 15 minutes, accompanied by piano, with an option to include all or some of your original audition pieces, or to present alternative pieces. The programme must include two operatic arias in the original languages, one song in the Western tradition in the original language, and additionally, one contemporary song written by a Black or South Asian composer after 1960 (a list of composers is detailed below as a guide).

Finals: All applicants must choose a programme of up to 20 minutes, to include a duet with a leading operatic singer (TBA), which must include at least two operatic arias and one contemporary song written by a Black or South Asian composer after 1960 (a list of composers is detailed below as a guide).

The competition organisers reserve the right to select, from the singers' lists of options, the repertoire choices they feel are best suited and which provide a balanced programme for the audience. Once the programme items have been agreed for the Final, no changes will be possible due to the sourcing and creation of orchestral parts. However, there may be flexibility for Preliminary Round repertoire changes nearer the time.

Below is a list of composers from which you might choose a contemporary song written by a Black or South Asian composer after 1960, although others are acceptable:

- Julius Eastman (1940-1990)
- Undine Smith Moore (1904-1989)
- Julia Perry (1924-1979)
- George Walker (1922-2018)
- Margaret Bonds (1913-1972)
- Errollyn Wallen CBE
- Daniel Kidane (b.1986)
- Hannah Kendall (b.1984)
- Eleanor Alberga (b 1949)
- Philip Herbert
- Pamela Z (b.1956)
- Nkeiru Okoye (b.1972)
- Adolphus Hailstork (b.1941)
- Justinian Tamusuza (b. 1951)
- Zenobia Powell Perry (1908-2004)
- Tania León (born 1943)
- Shirley Thompson OBE
- George Lewis (b. 1952)
- Param Vir (b. 1952)
- Samir Odeh-Tamimi (b. 1970)
- Sinta Wullur
- Joyce Bee Tuan Koh (b. 1976)

Allowances

Preliminary Rounds, Masterclasses, Rehearsals & Concert in Birmingham, UK

- Bed and Breakfast accommodation in Birmingham (for those not living within a 30-mile radius of Birmingham).
- Return Travel from home to Birmingham (either a standard rail fare for singers based in the UK, or economy airfare for participants from abroad).
- No bookings should be made for non-refundable travel until approval has been received from VOBO.

N.B. Please note that a fixed contribution of £20 will be paid towards an evening meal (upon provision of receipts) for each day applicants are required to stay away from home.

Application Conditions

Decisions of the organisers, audition committee and judges are at their absolute discretion and are not subject to correspondence, either verbal or written. By applying, the applicant agrees to abide by these conditions and agrees not to make any claim against the *Black British Classical Foundation* or the organisers regarding auditions and all aspects of the competition process.

Broadcast Coverage

A Broadcast partner is being identified for the competition. By applying, the applicant gives consent to the filming, recording and photography of their participation in the competition, and any associated promotional activity, for use by the broadcaster and organisers across associated television and radio channels and as online content to promote the competition in perpetuity and on all platforms.