

## Singer - Classical

Classical singers perform as soloists or as members of a choir or opera chorus.

### The Work

You could be:

- singing live to an audience or recording music to be broadcast on TV or radio, or for sale as CDs, DVDs and digital formats
- singing different types and styles of music — opera, choral music and oratorio
- performing solo with an accompanist, with a small orchestra or chamber group or with a full size orchestra and chorus
- using acting skills to play a character in a production
- spending a lot of time doing vocal exercises, practising, learning new music and rehearsing for performances
- going on tour, performing in places around the country or the world
- studying new pieces of music to extend your range
- singing in other languages, such as German or Italian
- promoting yourself to agents and directors and attending auditions.

### Pay

The range of earnings is wide and depends on an individual's experience. Classical singers tend to be paid for each concert or recital they give, or for a particular length of performance run, maybe 8 or 12 weeks. For the very few really famous classical singers the sky is the limit.

The Musicians' Union and Equity websites show recommended minimum pay rates (updated every year). For example, the recommended weekly rate for opera singers is £394.00 according to UK Theatre/SOLT (Society of London Theatre)/Equity Agreement Rates (1 October 2018-29 September 2019).

There are many pay rates listed, which depend on the venue (such as opera house or concert hall) and the type of performance (live, recorded or broadcast).

### Conditions

- You work in recording studios, concert halls, churches, cathedrals, theatres, opera houses and sometimes outdoors at classical festivals.
- You may have to tour around the UK and abroad, living for weeks away from home.
- You often work unsocial hours including evenings and weekends.
- You usually have to dress formally for performances.
- If acting and singing in an opera or musical theatre production you might wear make-up, a wig and historical costume.
- This is a very competitive area with little job security, and very few permanent jobs with salaries.
- Most singers work freelance, sometimes having short term contracts with opera companies, choirs or

musical theatre groups.

## Getting In

- Almost all classical singers have trained their voices for many years, and most will have studied at a university or conservatoire (music college). The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland offers a degree and postgraduate course in vocal studies.
- They can sight read music and can often play a musical instrument such as the piano to a reasonable standard.
- Colleges and universities run National Certificate (NC), Higher National Certificate (HNC) and Higher National Diploma (HND), degree and postgraduate courses in music, music performance and musical theatre. Most of these include singing as a subject. Entry qualifications vary, depending on the level of the course.
- Entry for degree courses is competitive. As well as the required academic qualifications, you usually need qualifications in music. For degree courses in Scotland, you normally need 3-4 Highers preferably including Music, English and a recommended one or two foreign languages (French, German and Italian are usually the most common) and Grade 7 or 8 on your main instrument (which includes the voice) from a body such as the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music.
- There is an audition and interview for most courses.
- You can get experience by being involved in student or amateur musical productions and entering competitions.
- Send sample recordings or a DVD showreel of your work to potential employers, for example opera and theatre directors.
- Singing is very hard work and you must keep fit as voice-strain or even a cold can affect your ability to work.

## What Does It Take

You should have:

- excellent singing and musical talent
- motivation and discipline, to practise regularly
- good sight reading skills
- self-confidence
- the determination to succeed
- the ability to adapt to different styles of music
- a wide repertoire
- the ability to read and pronounce (if not understand) the major European languages such as French, German, Italian and Spanish.

You also need:

- good team working skills
- the ability to network
- business skills, if you work on a freelance basis.

## Training

- Classical singers will usually continue to have lessons throughout their career, to develop their singing technique, look after their voice and extend the range of music they can perform.
- While studying, soloists will generally sing at concerts for free in order to gain experience and build up their reputation.
- Classical singers tend to hire an agent or manager and pay for regular singing tuition throughout their careers.

## Getting On

- Networking to develop the right contacts is very important for getting work in classical music.
- Many take on extra jobs to support themselves.
- Some singers train for alternative careers such as music therapy (see [Music Therapist](#)) or teaching.
- You may be able to perform abroad.

## More Information

The Creative and Cultural Skills website has a careers section called [Creative Choices](#) which has information on working in the music industry.

Young Scot and Creative Scotland operate the 'Nurturing Talent - Time to Shine Fund', which aims to support young people aged 11-25 and interested in developing creative or artistic skills. Both individuals and groups can apply for funding ranging from £50 to £1,000. For more information see the Young Scot website.

## Contacts

### Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM)

Tel: 020 7636 5400

Website: [www.abrsm.org](http://www.abrsm.org)

Twitter: @ABRSM

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/abrsm](http://www.facebook.com/abrsm)

### Creative and Cultural Skills

Tel: 020 7015 1800

Email: [info@ccskills.org.uk](mailto:info@ccskills.org.uk)

Website: [www.ccskills.org.uk](http://www.ccskills.org.uk)

Website (2): [ccskills.org.uk/careers](http://ccskills.org.uk/careers)

Twitter: @CCskills

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/ccskills](http://www.facebook.com/ccskills)

### Equity

Tel: 020 7379 6000

Email: [info@equity.org.uk](mailto:info@equity.org.uk)

Website: [www.equity.org.uk](http://www.equity.org.uk)

Twitter: @EquityUK

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/EquityUK](http://www.facebook.com/EquityUK)

### Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM)

Tel: 020 7221 3499

Email: [membership@ism.org](mailto:membership@ism.org)

Website: [www.ism.org](http://www.ism.org)

Twitter: @ISM\_music

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ISMusicians

**Musicians' Union (MU)**

Tel: 0141 341 2960

Website: www.musiciansunion.org.uk

Twitter: @WeAreTheMU

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Musicians.Union

**Scottish Drama Training Network**

Tel: 0141 270 8349

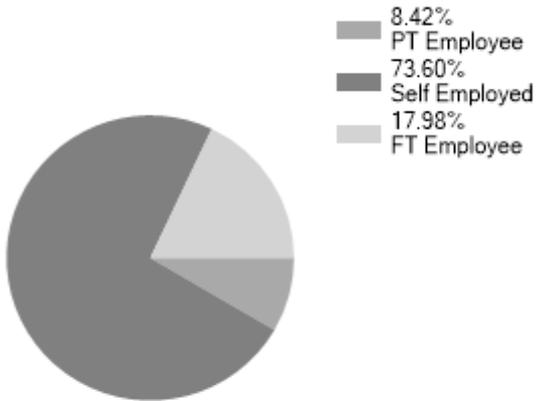
Website: sdtm.org

Twitter: @SDTNtweets

Facebook: www.facebook.com/sdtmofficial

Statistics

Employment Status UK %



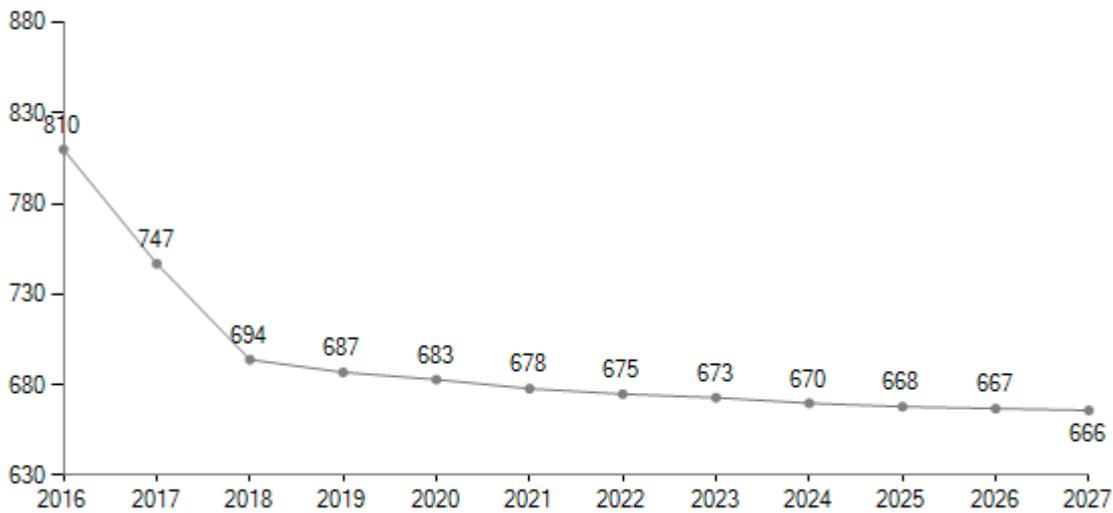
Past Unemployment - Scotland

Date	Unemployed
Dec 2016	0.86%
Dec 2018	1%
Mar 2019	1%

LMI data powered by [EMSI UK](#)

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [EMSI UK](#)