

Singer

Introduction

As a Singer, you will specialise in either classical or popular music. You'll work in opera or as part of a choir, or sing one or more different popular styles, such as pop, rock or hip hop.

Also known as

- Pop Star (Singer)
- Rock Star (Singer)

Work Activities

As a Singer, you will specialise in either classical or popular music. You'll work in opera or as part of a choir, or sing one or more different popular styles, such as pop, rock or hip hop.

All singers spend time practising; some attend singing lessons. You'll usually start by singing in your spare time until you have enough material to put an act together.

Until you have had enough success to employ a Manager or Agent, you will probably have to organise your own bookings, negotiate fees and contracts, and organise and plan performances.

As well as giving live performances, you might also spend time in studios, making recordings for CDs/downloads, radio, film and television. As you become more successful, you are likely to spend time touring, promoting their music and doing concerts. Successful Pop Singers also appear in videos.

Some Singers combine their work with teaching, giving personal tuition or writing music.

Singers on tour stay in temporary accommodation and can spend weeks away from home.

Being able to read, write and speak Welsh may be an advantage when you're looking for work in Wales.

Personal Qualities and Skills

To become a Singer, you need:

- a good singing voice
- self-confidence
- a love of music
- commitment and patience
- determination and discipline
- the ability to deal with criticism and rejection

As a Singer involved in pantomimes and stage musicals, you will usually need to be able to act and dance as well as sing.

Operatic Singers usually need to be able to sing in more than one language.

Pay and Opportunities

Pay

Salaries for Singers vary widely. Most singers are self-employed.



Equity, the performers' union, recommends minimum wage levels for all types of singer. Details are available on their website www.equity.org.uk.

In small scale theatre, Singers earn around £350 a week.

Singers in cabaret earn around £200 - £500 a week, and higher rates are possible.

Opera Singers, employed in national companies, can earn in the range of £22,500 - £35,500 a year.

Periods of unpaid unemployment are common. To help, you may be able to claim benefits. Take a look at our information article on Universal Credit to see if you might qualify.

Hours of work

Hours of work vary according to the event, however many scheduled performances are in the evening.

Where could I work?

Singers perform at a variety of venues including clubs, pubs, parties, charity balls, theatres, festivals and cruise ships and recording studios.

Opportunities occur for singers to work in other countries, usually on tour or at festivals.

Where are vacancies advertised?

Vacancies are advertised:

- on The Stage web site www.thestage.co.uk
- on the StarNow website www.starnow.co.uk
- at Jobcentre Plus and on the Find a Job website www.gov.uk/jobsearch
- in newspapers and on their web sites

However, new entrants normally have to promote themselves by contacting promoters, agents, music clubs and concert organisers.

Entry Routes and Training

Popular music

Singing in the field of popular music doesn't require formal training, although some people have singing lessons as a preparation.

Many Singers begin as Lead Vocalists with a band; some develop a career as a Solo Singer at a later stage. Some begin as Songwriters and later perform their own material.

Classical music

People who want to be Singers usually concentrate on developing all-round musicianship. For instance, they may combine the study of singing with playing at least one musical instrument.

Singing lessons may not start until the mid-teens or later. Singers are less likely than Instrumentalists to take graded exams while at school.

Choir schools take pupils from about the age of seven to be Choristers. Several choir schools also take boys and girls as ordinary pupils and offer general education combined with musical training.

Many Singers take a specialist course at a music college or a music degree at a university or college of higher education.

Degrees in music are mainly academic, but allow students to develop singing skills in choirs or solo parts. It is also possible to follow up a music degree with postgraduate study at a music college. In exceptional circumstances, non-music graduates may be considered for advanced singing courses.

As the voice doesn't normally mature until the mid-to-late 20s, intensive performance training often doesn't start until around 22 on a postgraduate/advanced course. Most music colleges offer such courses, including specialist training in opera and lieder.

As many students do not reach the exceptional standard needed to pursue a singing career, music colleges also provide training for teaching and other work in music-related areas.

Degree courses in the performing arts are not usually suitable for those who want a career as a professional Singer.

Work Experience

Useful skills and abilities can be gained in choir and chorus work, including church music.

Progression

The late maturing of the voice means that continued study at college or through private tuition is especially important for singers. It also makes early career development more difficult.

Most Singers will need to support themselves, by teaching or other work, while they build up contacts and gain experience in choirs or opera choruses, and taking work as a Soloist where possible.

Qualifications

Entry qualifications vary between music colleges. Check college websites for details.

A BTEC level 3 qualification in singing or performing arts could help you to stand out from the crowd, although it isn't widely available.

Adult Opportunities

Age limits

It is illegal for any organisation to set age limits for entry to employment, education or training, unless they can show there is a real need to have these limits.

Experience

Useful skills and abilities can be gained in choir and chorus work, including church music.

Courses

Many music schools and colleges relax entrance requirements for applicants with relevant paid or unpaid performing/acting experience.

Funding

Financial support for singing training is available from the Musicians Benevolent Fund www.helpmusicians.org.uk.

Further Information

Contacts

- **ScreenSkills**
Skills for the creative industries
Email: info@creativeskillset.org
Website: www.creativeskillset.org
- **Creative Choices**
Publisher: Creative & Cultural Skills
Email: info@creative-choices.co.uk
Website: www.creative-choices.co.uk

- **Creative & Cultural Skills**
Skills for craft, cultural heritage, design, literature, music, performing arts and visual arts
Email: london@ccskills.org.uk
Website: ccskills.org.uk
- **Creative Scotland**
Scottish enquiries
Email: enquiries@creativescotland.com
Website: www.creativescotland.com
- **Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM)**
Tel: 020 7629 4413
Email: membership@ism.org
Website: www.ism.org
- **Equity (Scotland)**
Scottish enquiries
Tel: 0141 2482472
Email: scotland@equity.org.uk
Website: www.equity.org.uk
- **Federation of Drama Schools (FDS)**
Tel: 020 7529 8794
Email: info@dramauk.co.uk
Website: www.dramauk.co.uk
- **BPI: British Recorded Music Industry**
Tel: 020 7803 1300
Email: general@bpi.co.uk
Website: www.bpi.co.uk
- **Equity (Wales)**
Address: Third Floor, 1 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9SD
Tel: 029 2039 7971
Email: wales@equity.org.uk
Website: www.equity.org.uk

Related Careers

- Disc Jockey
- Music Manager
- Stage Manager
- Theatre Lighting Technician
- Make-up Artist
- Theatre Sound Technician
- Stage Crew
- Actor/Actress
- Dancer
- Musician