

Commission brief for a series of panel artworks to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

Background

August 2025 marks the 150th Anniversary of the birth of composer and conductor Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. In his time Taylor was the most famous man of African heritage in England. He had an excellent reputation in the US where he toured three times and was invited to meet President Theodore Roosevelt.

Despite his success Taylor died in penury, and over time his work was disregarded. Thanks in part to the work of Chineke! Orchestra, he is now seeing something of a renaissance. Croydon's resident theatre company Talawa also did much to promote understanding of the composer through their award-winning play 'Recognition' which was an important part of Croydon's London Borough of Culture year.

Taylor was the first Black recipient of an English Heritage blue plaque in 1975, which is on his home in South Norwood.

Further information on Taylor is attached as appendix one.

Commission

As part of a wider commemorative arts and heritage programme, Croydon Council Culture team seeks to commission up to 10 UK-based Black or Global Majority practitioners working in the areas of fine art, iPad/digital art, graphic design, illustration, photography, design or craft to create a series of artworks that will be used as lamppost banners and graphic assets to celebrate the forthcoming anniversary.

This opportunity is particularly geared towards emerging and early career practitioners; however, we would be happy to receive applications from established practitioners should they wish to participate.

The commissions will reflect and celebrate:

- Taylor's unique and extraordinary story;
- Taylor's body of work;
- Taylor's legacy.

The on-street exhibition will run from 15 August – 31 October 2025.

A fee of £1,450 (plus VAT if applicable) will be paid to successful practitioners for their artwork. Practitioners will be paid on a freelance self-employed basis and will be responsible for their own tax and National Insurance contributions. This fee is devised on the basis of 10 practitioners creating one artwork each. Should we appoint fewer practitioners, there will be an option for practitioners to create an additional piece which will be remunerated at a fee of £1,250.

Fees are calculated on the estimated basis that the project will represent approximately five (5) days' work at a day rate of circa £284 (in line with Artists' Union recommendation for a practitioner with three (3) years' experience).

The outcome of the residency will be:

- 10 new artworks created which celebrate and reflect on the life, work and impact of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor.
- A local temporary celebratory exhibition of the artwork on lampposts North End and High Street, Croydon.
- Possible inclusion of the artwork in a heritage exhibition in autumn/winter 2025.
- Possible inclusion of the artwork on an on-street hoarding exhibition summer 2025.
- Artwork will be archived as part of a collection on the anniversary commemoration.
- Artwork may be included in reports, programmes, marketing materials relating to the anniversary programme.
- Inspired inclusive creative engagement which includes non-arts audiences/participants.
- Greater shared understanding of the work and importance of Taylor amongst a range of audiences and participants.

Examples of lamppost banners and hoardings:



You can see more examples on the Creative Croydon banner programme [here](#). Note this anniversary commission is not part of this excellent programme which is managed by Croydon BID.

The Practitioner –

The successful candidates will:

- Be a fine art, iPad/digital art, photography, design, illustrator or craft practitioner who identifies with a Black or Global Majority ethnicity.
- Be interested in Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and wish to celebrate him.
- Be committed to inclusive practice.

- Be able to demonstrate confidence, vision and creative aptitude for developing inclusive arts activities for a wide range of communities.
- Be a self-starter.
- Be able to provide evidence of successfully working to deadlines and having good time management skills.
- Have a proven track record of producing research-based artwork.
- Be UK based.

We would particularly like to hear from **Croydon** and **south London-based** practitioners.

In the case of a Deaf or disabled practitioner being appointed in this role, access support can be made available. This could also supplement any Access to Work grant.

Expectations of the commission:

Croydon Council will expect the practitioner to:

- Actively seek out information relevant to the programme.
- Create and digitally supply a new artwork (in portrait) for the anniversary commemoration which will sit within an on-street lamppost banner exhibition.
- Spend approximately five days working on the project.
- Maintain contact with the project commissioners, flagging any additional support needs or concerns within a manageable timeframe.
- Adhere to the agreed project timetable.
- Give free use of the artwork to the Council and its commissioned partners (including Museum of Croydon, Croydon Archives, The BRIT School, The Royal College of Music, London Mozart Players) during the anniversary year, 2025.
- Give free use of film or photographic representations of the artwork to the Council, its funders and commissioned partners on an indefinite basis.
- Agree for a digital copy of the artwork to be ingested into Croydon Archive where it may appear within a digital repository.
- Under the guidance of the Council, be confident to talk to the press about their work and this programme. Support press and marketing campaigns.
- Complete and submit a partner evaluation questionnaire.

Note: Croydon Council will be working with a graphic designer who will place the artwork within a frame which highlights Samuel Coleridge-Taylor 150 and carries funders' logos.

Timeline:

Funding has only recently been confirmed for this project so unfortunately the schedule is very tight.

- Applications open **2 June 2025**
- Applications close **12 noon 19 June 2025**
- Interviews **23 and 25 June**
- Appointments **27 June**
- Contracts issued **30 June/1 July**

10am 11 July deadline to submit first sketches/ideas to commissioner for input, feedback will be returned by close of play **14 July**, or within three days of any earlier submissions.

Final artwork to be submitted by **3pm Thursday 24 July**.

Practitioners to be available on **15 August** for press and PR opportunities.

The Council operates on a 30-day payment schedule on receipt of an invoice. Applicants should note however that it can also take around 30 days for a contractor to be set up on the Council system. This means that payment for this project may not materialise until mid to late August.

How to apply:

Applicants should apply by email; applications should be mindful of the requirements for a successful applicant (as set out above) and should consist of:

- 1 CV – maximum two pages
- 2 A letter of application (maximum two pages) explaining your interest in and why you think that you are right for this commission. **You should confirm in the email that you are available for a short online interview on either 23rd or 25th June 2025, and if successful could start work on the commission by 30th June 2025.**
- 3 Your letter should contain your UTR or Ltd company number.
- 4 A selection of images of your past work, this should be **no more than three sides of A4**, they should be sent as pdf attachments and titled 'Image 1', 'Image 2' etc. An accompanying list should be provided in the following format:
 - Image [1], [title], [materials used], [dimensions], [year made], [brief description]
- 5 The name and telephone contact details of two referees, at least one of whom can comment from first-hand experience of your professional practice.
- 6 Your own contact details including email address.
- 7 State if you would be interested in completing two artworks in the event that 10 practitioners are not appointed.
- 8 **Total file size should not exceed 3mb** and we suggest image should print no higher than 150dpi

APPLICATIONS MUST BE SUBMITTED BY 12:00 NOON ON THURSDAY 19th JUNE.

and should be emailed to: culture@croydon.gov.uk.

Applications should clearly state 'SCT 150 Commission' in the subject line

Submissions received after 12:00 noon will be discounted.

We regret we will not be able to return application materials.

If you require access support to enable you to complete this process, please email culture@croydon.gov.uk, preferably before Friday 6th June to discuss your requirements.

Recruitment process:

Short online interviews will take place on **23rd or 25th June**.

The interview panel will comprise of members of the Council's culture team and regeneration team as well as Katia Del-Rio Smith representing Croydon's cultural sector network group, Croydon Makers & Creators.

The interview will assess interviewees using the following criteria:

- Evidence of understanding the programme brief.
- Quality and relevance of previous artistic work, including ability to provide a creative response to a brief.
- Evidence of good communication and advocacy skills.

- Ability to manage time and to complete the programme within the period of the commission.
- Previous experience and evidence of ability to complete a project in a professional manner.
- Evidence of a basic understanding of and interest in Samuel Coleridge-Taylor.
- Evidence of working in an accessible and inclusive way.

Other information:

1. Prior to application we strongly recommend that you view the following resources:
www.culturecroydon.com – for information about the work of the culture team.
2. You may also find the following sites helpful:
[Samuel Coleridge-Taylor: An Introduction](#)
[Who is composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor? | Southbank Centre](#)
[Samuel Coleridge-Taylor | Composer | Blue Plaques | English Heritage](#)

Appendix One

Background information on Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

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Samuel Coleridge Taylor 1875-1912.

The life of composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor though tragically short was one of outstanding achievement. Amongst his many important works are 'Dream Lovers' (1898), *Herod* (1901), *Scenes from an Everyday Romance* (1900) *Ulysses* (1901-2), 'Deep River' (1904) and *Kubla Khan* (1905). He is particularly remembered for his music *The Song of Hiawatha*, based on Longfellow's poem of the same name.

Born in Holborn in August 1875, the son of a West African doctor and an English mother, Samuel was named after the poet Samuel Taylor-Coleridge. During his first year he came with his mother to Croydon where they lived in an Elis David lodging house. Despite moving many times, the borough of Croydon was his home for the remainder of his life.

With his father returning to Africa, Samuel was gifted a small violin by a family member who also taught him the rudimentary positions. It was when Samuel's mother Alice married, and the family moved from Elis David Road to Waddon New Road that his talent was first recognised by others.

One day Joseph Beckwith, a violin teacher and conductor of a Croydon orchestra glanced out of a window while giving a music lesson and saw the well-dressed young Samuel, precious violin in hand, playing marbles. He requested Samuel play a selection of duets and, surprised at the child's competence, became Samuel's violin and music mentor.

While attending the British School in Tamworth Road Samuel provided a violin accompaniment to the singing lessons. He was himself a competent chorister. Samuel enrolled as a student of violin and piano at the Royal College of Music in the Christmas Term of 1890. Whilst there he wrote anthems to which he set the words. In 1891 this included a

Te Deum which was brought to the notice of Sir George Grove, on whose advice Samuel dropped the violin for composition. In early 1895 the Croydon Conservatoire of Music appointed Samuel a teacher despite his still being a student at the Royal College of Music.

Having struck up a friendship with American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar in 1896 they formed a duet when Dunbar came to England. Samuel's contribution was *Hiawatha Sketches for Violin and Pianoforte*. From this arose *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* which is among his most appreciated pieces.

By 1900 Samuel's *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* had gained vogue in America. The first occasion on which he visited America was in 1904 as a guest of the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Choral Society of Washington. This Society was without precedent in comprising entirely of two-hundred Black American citizens. It was formed in 1901 to produce and promote his work in the United States. His first visit coincided with the Coleridge-Taylor Festival. The first two of the three very successful concerts held in Washington was devoted to *Hiawatha*.

Samuel held several prestigious posts. By 1905 he was professor of theory and harmony at the Crystal Palace School of Art and Music. Among his last letters in 1910 is a reference to his being appointed professor and sub-conductor at the Guildhall School of Music, London.

He was generous with his skill and contributed much to Croydon's cultural life early in the 20th century. He conducted many performances at Croydon venues and became the first President of the organisation that was by 1909 called the Croydon Stagers.

Samuel had attended the Royal College of Music at the same time as vocalist Miss Jessie Sarah Fleetwood Walmisley, and they increasingly worked together in Croydon. In 1899 they were married at Holy Trinity Church, Selhurst. Their son, Hiawatha, was born in 1900, and their daughter Gwendoline, the future conductor and composer Avril Coleridge-Taylor in 1903.

Towards the end of August 1912, whilst at West Croydon Station to buy a ticket for a show at Crystal Palace Samuel collapsed. He was taken home and retired to bed where he was nursed by Jessie. Although not thought to be in danger pneumonia set in and he died aged 37 on 1st September. He was buried in Bandon Hill Cemetery.