



The Oxford Commas: Aca-Demic Weapons – Edinburgh Fringe

By [Chris Omaweng](#) / August 25, 2025

Founded in 2015, The Oxford Commas make an impressive Edinburgh Fringe debut in 2025. I don't really know why Oxford has as many student-led a cappella groups as it does, and you'd be forgiven for thinking that Oxford students who want to participate in an extra-curricular activity either row a boat or perform in an a cappella group. Or perhaps both. The Commas, however, go a step further than the other Oxford groups I saw at Fringe 2025, drawing a narrative thread through an eclectic selection of songs that, taken together, say much, much more than, "*Hey Fringe! We're from Oxford and here are some songs for you!*"

Some of the links into certain songs may have technically been contrived, such as the idea that the members' love/hate relationship with Oxford University could even be 'Poison' (the Rita Ora song from 2015, not the 1989 Alice Cooper one, though I suspect it's only a matter of time before an Oxford a cappella group will make forays into glam rock and heavy metal). The storyline gave the audience a feel for student life at Oxford, which includes some historical traditions stretching back centuries that are still retained to this day, and a dress code that must be adhered to for dinner when it is served in college halls. I was so sceptical of what we were being told that I couldn't resist looking up the regulations afterwards. They are even more stringent than the Commas led us to believe. For instance, when sitting examinations, students must also wear academic gowns, and carry an academic hat – the operative word being 'carry', not 'wear': entitlement to wear the hat only comes after a degree has been 'conferred'. So the hat is placed on the exam table. And so on, and so forth.



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Anyway, as far as this show goes, the range of songs performed demonstrated a range of vocal skills, and it was a departure from the near-relentless upbeat beatboxing from other Oxford groups. There were clear and beautiful harmonies, and I loved the variation in texture and volume, partly achieved by selective use of microphones. Even the religious nature of some of the Oxford traditions are captured through song (their terms are still called Michaelmas, Hilary – named for St Hilary of Poitiers – and Trinity), and the group members are palpably supportive of one another, applauding solo numbers as loudly as we were in the audience. It seems almost unfair to compare the various Oxford a cappella groups at the Fringe – they are, after all, all student productions. But stuff it. This was the best one of the three I saw. The mix of storytelling and songs sets the Oxford Commas head and shoulders above the rest.



Experience the world of dreaming spires, gowns and essay crises through this unique a cappella show that provides a lighthearted take on the enigmatic and prestigious Oxford University and the stereotypes that surround it. Thirteen powerful voices who have called Oxford home present the realities of life as a student in this mysteriously beautiful town, seeking to explain its distinctive and unmistakable charm with an a cappella twist.

Quinton Lee – Co-President, Assistant Musical Director, Tenor 1

Ezra Nathan-Stoute – Musical Director, Baritone

Eshaan Iyer – Co-President, Tenor 2

Charlie Dray – Welfare Officer, Bass and Beatbox

Thomas Li – Publicity Officer, Tenor 1 and Beatbox

Oscar Lawson – Secretary, Baritone

Patrick Guan – Bass

Ben Gilbert – Baritone

Sebastian Cynn – Tenor 2

Kilian Günthner – Tenor 2

Maggie Reitman – Tenor 1

Annabelle Schrier – Tenor 1

Seb Pedder – Baritone

Llew Richards – Tenor 2 and Beatbox

THE OXFORD COMMAS: ACA-DEMIC WEAPONS

theSpace @ Niddry Street at the [Edinburgh Fringe](#)

18 to 23 August 2025

Author



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