

## SYLLABUS FOR THE BISHOP OF OXFORD'S BRONZE CHORISTER AWARD

**EXAMINATIONS** are held twice a year, in June and September. Successful candidates receive their certificates at Choral Evensong in Christ Church Cathedral on a Saturday in late October/early November.

**CLOSING DATES** for examinations are posted on the website.

**ENQUIRIES/ENTRIES** should be addressed to Mrs Janet Low, 3 Sheepway Court, Iffley, Oxford OX4 4JL, 01865 777257, awards@rscm-oxford.org.uk. The entry form can be downloaded from the Oxford Area Awards web page (<http://www.rscm-oxford.org.uk/areaawards.htm>).

**MUSIC** can be bought from RSCM Music Direct, 0845 021 7726, musicdirect@rscm.com, <http://www.rscm.com/shop>

**STRUCTURE AND DISTRIBUTION OF MARKS** reflect that of the *Voice for Life* scheme. There are five sections, only four of which are examined. (Section D is satisfied with an appropriate testimonial submitted with the candidate's application.) Marks are distributed as follows:

- A Using the voice well 50%
- B Musical skills and understanding 20%
- C Repertoire 10%
- D Belonging to the choir [testimonial]
- E Choir in context 20%

The pass mark is 60%. To pass, candidates must show consistency throughout the examination, though a pass mark in every section is not required. Successful candidates are classified as follows:

- 85% Distinction
- 75% Merit
- 60% Pass

### **EXAMINATION CONDITIONS**

1. There is no age limit for the award.
2. The examiner will be RSCM-validated. For moderation purposes, the examination may be recorded.
3. The Bronze Award examination takes 25 minutes.
4. An accompanist is normally provided by the candidate. (The examiner will not act as accompanist.) After Section A of the examination is completed, the accompanist leaves the examination room.
5. Candidates have an area to warm up before the examination.
6. Copies of all prepared pieces and any other relevant materials must be provided for the examiner's use.
7. Using illegal photocopies automatically disqualifies a candidate.
8. Entry fees and closing dates are posted on the website. Successful candidates receive their Bronze medallion and green ribbon by post with their mark sheet. Unsuccessful candidates will be made a refund of the cost of medallion and ribbon. Cheques should be made payable to 'RSCM Berks Bucks and Oxon Bishop's Award' and sent with the entry form.
9. The RSCM may refuse an examination entry without stating a reason. In such cases, the examination fee is refunded in full.
10. If a candidate cannot attend an examination, through illness or emergency, a letter of explanation must be sent immediately to the organiser, Mrs Janet Low, 3 Sheepway Court, Iffley Village, Oxford OX4 4JL, email: janetcllow@gmail.com. A refund, or credit slip for future entry, of up to 50% of the examination fee, may be issued at the discretion of the RSCM.
11. On signing the entry form, candidates (and their representatives and trainers) are deemed to be accepting the entry conditions, and the examiner's musical judgements.
12. Results are sent to the candidate (or representative) by post, usually within two weeks of the examination. Examiners do not divulge results at the time of the examination.
13. Appeals: there is an appeals procedure, which may be downloaded from the Oxford Area Awards web page (<http://www.rscm-oxford.org.uk/areaawards.htm>). This must be followed in the event of a complaint or appeal.

### **RSCM Award Syllabus (Bronze standard)**

#### **PREREQUISITES**

Candidates should *normally*:

1. Have been regular members of the choir of an RSCM-affiliated church for at least 2 years (transfer is acceptable if clearly documented). If RSCM affiliation is not currently maintained, the candidate must instead be an RSCM individual member.
2. Have satisfactorily completed all the targets in their *Voice for Life* Dark Blue Training book.

3. Submit, with their application, a written testimonial from their choir trainer, counter-signed by the vicar/minister/head teacher/director of music, confirming their commitment to the choir and general musical competence. (This satisfies the requirements of Section D mentioned above,) and giving details of RSCM singing courses or training events they have attended.

#### A. Using the voice well (50%)

Candidates may sing each of the items in this Section using *either* the melody line *or* their own voice part (if different). Altos and basses singing the melody line in any item may do so at a lower pitch than that printed, if this is more convenient.

##### 1. Hymn singing: Maximum 15 marks (9 to pass)

Candidates should sing 3 verses of their chosen, prepared hymn (of 4-line verses). The second verse should be sung unaccompanied.

##### 2. Psalm singing: Maximum 15 marks (9 to pass)

Candidates should prepare and sing

- either* a) chanted psalmody (melody or their own voice part), to music of their own choice. This should be *either* 8 consecutive verses and the Gloria, to Anglican chant or to a plainsong tone, *or* the whole of a responsorial psalm
- or* b) the whole of one of the following Psalm Songs, from *Music for Common Worship 1*:
- *O God, you search me and you know me* (Farrell) pp. 396-7
  - *O Lord, be my help* (Ogden) pp. 398-9
  - *Sing to God with joy and gladness* (Bell) pp. 400-1

Marks will be given for accuracy, but equal weight will be given to interpretation and musicality.

##### 3. Prepared item: Maximum 20 marks (12 to pass)

Candidates should select the whole of any one item from the *RSCM Bronze Collection* (order ref D0091) (listed below) which they have already performed or might perform in their own choir. (Other editions may be used.) They may sing *either* the melody or their own voice part. (If they sing the melody, altos and basses may use a transposed edition to suit their vocal range.) Examiners will take account of the level of difficulty of the music, but will attach more weight to interpretation and musicality.

Page	Title	Composer
1	A Gaelic Blessing	Rutter
4	A Prayer of St Richard of Chichester	White
8	And didst thou travel light	Shephard
11	Ave Maria	Lindley
15	Ave verum corpus	Elgar
20	Away with gloom, away with doubt	Ferguson
23	Child in the manger	Sanger
26	Day by day	How
29	Fairest Lord Jesus	How
32	From the rising of the sun	Ouseley
38	Glory, love, and praise and honour	Eberlin arr. Harris
45	Hide not thou thy face	Farrant
48	How beautiful upon the mountains	Stainer
54	I am the bread of life	Lole
58	I give you a new commandment	Aston
62	In the heart where love is abiding	Plainsong arr. Barnard
67	Let all the world in every corner sing	Halsey
72	Listen	Nazareth
74	Love one another	S. S. Wesley
78	Loving God	Aston
81	May the peace of God the Father	Jewish melody arr Harper
84	O for a closer walk with God	Stanford
88	O mysterium ineffabile	Lallouette
90	O Holy Spirit, Lord of grace	Tye
93	Praise, O praise our God and King	How
98	Sent by the Lord am I	Trad. arr. Weaver
102	Steal away	Trad. arr. Weaver
104	The Easter Song of Praise (Exultet)	Shephard
108	The fruits of the land	Ogden
111	The Lord's my shepherd	Trad. arr. Archer
116	This is the day (Haec dies)	Morley arr. Greening
123	Thou visitest the earth	Greene
129	Turn thy face from my sins	Attwood
132	We cannot measure how you heal	Scottish trad. arr. Archer

In the above tests, examiners will look for

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| a) good unforced tone   | e) accurate intonation  |
| b) good posture   | f) rhythmic accuracy  |
| c) good breath control with the ability to sustain to the end of a phrase | g) some dynamic contrast  |
| d) clear diction including good open vowel sounds                         | h) evidence of comprehension of the text and mood of the piece. |

All the above should produce a *sensitive* and *musical* performance.

### **B. Musical skills and understanding (20%)**

#### *1. Sight reading: Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)*

Candidates will be asked:

- To clap (or sing on one note) from sight, and unaccompanied, a simple rhythm in simple time, which may include dotted notes. A second attempt may be allowed if necessary.
- To sing at sight and accompanied by the examiner, a short melody (of about 10 notes), in a key of up to three sharps or flats, to a vowel or to solfa (at the candidate's choice). The key chord and first note will be given. A second attempt will be allowed.

#### *2. & 3. Aural tests & Further questions: Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)*

Candidates will be asked to:

- Clap the rhythm pattern of a 2-bar phrase played twice, the pulse first being indicated.
- Sing (as an echo and in strict time) three simple 2-bar phrases, each played only once. The key chord and tonic are sounded, and the pulse indicated, before the test begins.
- Identify the following intervals, each played not more than twice (both notes played simultaneously): major and minor 3rd, perfect 4th, perfect 5th. The candidate will be asked to sing the lower note, then the higher note, and then to name the interval. Two or three examples will be given, within the candidate's vocal range.

Using the prepared item as a starting point, questions will then be asked about:

- notes of *either* the treble *or* bass stave, at the candidate's choice
- time values of notes
- time signatures (simple time)
- key signatures (of major keys up to 3 sharps and 3 flats)
- simple Italian musical terms

### **C. Repertoire (10%): Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)**

Candidates will be asked two straightforward questions about their prepared item. Answers may be expressed in language appropriate to their age or experience. Topics to be covered will be selected from:

- Text and music (origin, style, meaning, and how the music, including the accompaniment, reflects the text);
- Context (historical, musical, liturgical and seasonal, other music written in this genre or period).

Typical questions on repertoire at Bronze standard are:

- 'Describe the mood of this piece, and say generally how the text is reflected in the music.'
- 'When was the text (*or*, the music) written, and by whom?'
- 'In what season of the Church's year might this piece suitably be sung?'
- 'In which part of your Sunday morning service might this piece be sung?'
- 'Name another piece, or a hymn or song, that your choir might sing at the same season or occasion.'

*All singers on the Voice for Life scheme are expected to develop their knowledge and understanding of the repertoire. The Voice for Life Choir Trainer's Book (order ref F0100) provides helpful material for this part of the examination.*

### **D. Belonging to the Choir**

There is no formal examination for this section, and no marks are allocated. However, it is a vital part of the Bronze Award. With their application, candidates must send a written testimonial from their choir trainer, countersigned by the vicar/minister/chaplain/head teacher/director of music, confirming their commitment to the choir.

### **E. Choir in context (20%): Maximum 20 marks (12 to pass)**

#### *1. Bible*

Referring to their prepared psalm, candidates will be asked to describe what kind of prayer it is (joyful, sorrowful, praise, thanksgiving, etc.) and why.

#### *2. Liturgy*

- Candidates will be asked to describe the sung parts of the form of Sunday service (morning or evening, at their choice) with which they are familiar. They may bring, and refer to, a service book or card.
- Candidates should choose one major festival of the Church's year (e.g., Christmas, Passiontide, Easter, Pentecost). They will be asked:

- to show knowledge of the Bible story which the festival celebrates;
- to name a psalm, hymn or worship song which they think helps to explain the significance of the festival, and to say why it does so; and
- to name, and show knowledge of, a suitable anthem or song for the festival.

*(Candidates should bring two copies of their chosen pieces).*

### 3. Ministry

Candidates will be asked to describe what motivates and inspires them as singers in a Church choir. They should show some awareness of their own responsibilities as choir members in the services they sing.

*Candidates are not expected to perform any examples in Section E. Their understanding of issues raised in this Section will depend on their age and experience, and answers may be expressed in simple language. Examiners will bear in mind that this is a first award.*

#### Assessment criteria (guidance for singers and their choir trainers)

##### Section A Using the voice well

The performance of each piece will be assessed on the following:

###### 1. Posture and presentation

*Good candidates will:* stand and hold their music well throughout the examination.

*Poor candidates may:* bury their head in their music and sing into their copy.

Slouch, tap their feet or fidget as they sing.

###### 2. Vocal technique: breath management, tone, diction, range

*Good candidates will:* breathe in appropriate places.

Sustain the sound to the end of a line or phrase.

Produce good, full tone, even at the extremes of their range.

Project the voice well.

Produce good vowel sounds.

Articulate consonants clearly.

*Poor candidates may:* produce uneven breathy tone.

Be unable to sustain the sound to the end of a phrase.

Strain for high or low notes.

Have weak or unprojected tone.

Have poor diction.

###### 3. General musicianship: accuracy, expression, sensitivity

*Good candidates will:* sing notes and rhythms accurately and with good intonation.

Be able to keep a steady pulse.

Demonstrate a good dynamic range and an understanding of phrasing and articulation.

Show an appreciation of musical style appropriate to the piece being sung.

Be able to convey the mood of the music and reflect the meaning of the text.

Sing confidently and with great sensitivity.

Take care to place consonants carefully at the ends of notes.

*Poor candidates may:* sing frequently out of tune.

Make a large number of errors of pitch and rhythm.

Have a tendency either to rush or to slow down without good musical reason.

Reveal little awareness of dynamics, phrasing and articulation.

Sing with little regard for the mood or musical style of the piece.

Falter and appear to lack confidence.

Be careless with the placing of consonants and the change of vowel in diphthongs.

##### Section B Musical skills and understanding

Sight-reading:: candidates should be able to do the sample sight-singing tests contained in the Voice for Life Choir Trainer's Book (order ref F0100), using Dark Blue level for the Bronze Award. However, the award tests are accompanied.

###### 1. Musical skills

*Good candidates will:* sight-read fluently with a high proportion of the notes correct and sung in tune.

Maintain the tempo and rhythm even when mistakes are made.

Show an awareness of dynamics, phrasing and articulation.

Sound confident and sing with conviction and continuity, even if wrong.

Maintain good tone.

Breathe in appropriate places.

Sing words correctly.

Be accurate in aural tests, with all sung responses in tune and clapped responses rhythmic and steady.

*Poor candidates may:* falter and stop when they are unsure or make mistakes.

Lack confidence, sing with poor tone and out of tune.

Ignore dynamic markings, phrasing and articulation.

Breathe in inappropriate places.

Make frequent errors of pitch and rhythm.

Fail to sing words correctly.

Be highly inaccurate in aural tests, with responses out of tune or unrhythmic.

###### 2. Musical understanding will be assessed not only through the further questions indicated above, but throughout each candidate's performance.

*Good candidates will:* show their knowledge of notation and theory by singing their repertoire and performing sight-reading and aural tests accurately.

Observe common Italian terms, musical symbols and dynamic markings and be able to explain what they mean if asked.

*Poor candidates may:* show a poor understanding of notation and theory by making a large number of errors when they sing their repertoire and perform sight-reading and aural tests.

Fail to observe Italian terms, musical symbols and dynamic markings and be unable to explain them if asked.

Make mistakes in pitching intervals and be unable to identify intervals.

##### Section C Repertoire

Section C of the *Voice for Life* Choir Trainer's Book contains sample questions, sample answers and helpful hints on how to find the information. Use Dark Blue level for the Bronze Award. The Singer's Workbook for the Dark Blue level (order ref F0102 ) also contains hints on finding out about the music, and give questions to answer. Candidates will be asked questions appropriate to their age and experience.

*Good candidates will* :be able to talk knowledgeably about the music they sing with regard to the period in which it was written, the features of the musical style, and the origins and the meaning of the text.

*Poor candidates may*: be unable to demonstrate knowledge of the music they sing beyond what is on the page.

#### **Section D Belonging to the choir**

There is no formal examination for this section and no marks are allocated, but it is a vital part of the awards. With their application candidates must send a written testimonial from their Choir Trainer, signed by the Incumbent/Minister/Head Teacher/Director of Music, confirming their commitment to the choir.

#### **Section E Choir in context**

*Good candidates will*: give thoughtful answers to questions on their role and that of the choir.

Demonstrate an awareness of the significance of musical ministry within a church or community.

Be able to give examples of music suitable for specific occasions or seasons.

Have a comprehensive knowledge of the major seasons in the Church's year (e.g., Advent, Lent) and major festivals (e.g., Ascension Day) and understand the pattern and format of services in their church.

*Poor candidates may* appear not to have considered their role in the choir.

Demonstrate poor awareness of the significance of musical ministry within a church or community.

Be unable to make suitable repertoire suggestions for specific occasions or seasons.

Be unable to answer simple questions on the Church's year or the format of services.