

SYLLABUS FOR THE BISHOP OF OXFORD'S SILVER 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, 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, 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 examination takes 35 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 Silver 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: glowpigs@aol.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 (Silver standard)

PREREQUISITES

Candidates should *normally*:

1. Have been regular members of the choir of an RSCM-affiliated church for at least 3 years (transfer will be acceptable if clearly documented).
2. Have satisfactorily completed all the targets in their *Voice for Life* Red Training book.
3. Have been awarded the Bishop of Oxford's Bronze Award or RSCM equivalent (i.e., any RSCM Bronze standard singing award) or other equivalent award.
4. 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. Candidates should give details of RSCM singing courses or training events they have attended.

A. Using the voice well (50%)

Candidates must sing each item in this Section using their own voice part at the published pitch.

1. Hymn singing: Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)

Candidates should sing 3 verses of their chosen, prepared hymn having verses of more than 4 lines long. The second verse should be sung unaccompanied. They may choose to sing some or all of their verses in harmony or in unison, having first informed the examiner.

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

Candidates should sing psalmody (where relevant, in their own voice part) to music of their own choice. This must be
either 8 – 10 consecutive verses, and the Gloria to an Anglican double chant or to a plainsong tone,
or the whole of a responsorial psalm.

Candidates should select a portion of the psalm (at least 2 verses) to sing unaccompanied. Marks will be given for accuracy of chanting, but significant weight will also be given to clarity, evenness of articulation, and sensitive interpretation of the text.

3. Prepared anthem: Maximum 15 marks (9 to pass)

Candidates should select the whole of any one item from the *RSCM Silver Collection* (order ref B0111) which they have already sung or might sing in their own choir. (Other editions are acceptable.) Marks will take account of the level of difficulty of the music, but more weight will be given to interpretation and musicality.

Pag e	Title	Composer
1	Angel voices	Shephard
9	As water to the thirsty	Coleman arr. Barnard
14	At the river	Copland
21	Blessed be the God and Father	S. S. Wesley
34	Cantate Domino	Pitoni
36	For the gifts of life and love	Nardone
42	Fountain of Sweets	Aston
46	Glorious and powerful God	Wood
54	How beauteous are their feet	Stanford
63	I will sing of the Lord's great love	McKinley
76	It is a thing most wonderful	Moore
84	Jubilate!	Ogden
98	King of Glory	Walford Davies
100	Listen sweet Dove	Ives
105	My Soul, there is a Country	Parry
113	Now go in peace	Mair arr. Jeffcoat
117	O God, thou art my God	Purcell
129	O Lord, make thy servant	Byrd
137	O magnum mysterium	Archer
144	O salutaris hostia	Rossini
151	O thou the central orb	Wood
159	O vos omnes	Daley
164	Rejoice, the Lord is King	Weaver
173	Salvator mundi	Tallis
180	Shepherd of souls	Barnard
184	Solus ad victimam	Leighton
189	The Beatitudes	Watson Henderson
200	This lovely lady	Kelly
207	Ubi caritas	Ives
211	Wash me throughly	S. S. Wesley

4. Prepared setting or song: Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)

Candidates should choose and prepare:

either (a) any through-composed (not chanted or metrical) setting of the Magnificat *or* of the Holy Communion (*Gloria & Agnus Dei* only), from which the examiner will choose excerpts to be performed. Where relevant, candidates should sing their own voice part;

or (b) the complete melody line of a song suitable for performance in worship. This song should

- have a melodic range of at least an octave

- display rhythmic interest and subtlety, including dotted rhythms and/or syncopation
- have 2 or more stanzas or sections, each at least 16 bars long.
Suitable choices might be *Panis angelicus* (Franck), *The Woodcutter's Song* (Vaughan Williams), *Here is bread* (Kendrick), *I am the Bread of Life* (Toolan). The examiner will choose two stanzas, or an excerpt of around 32 bars, to be sung.

In the above tests, examiners will look for

- good unforced tone with consistent control
- good posture
- good breath control with the ability to sustain to the end of a phrase
- clear diction including good open vowel sounds
- accurate intonation
- rhythmic accuracy
- good expressive and dynamic contrasts
- evidence of comprehension of the text and mood of the piece.

All of these should produce a sensitive and musical performance, with evidence of a maturity of tone appropriate to the candidate's age and experience.

B. Musical skills and understanding (20%)

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

Candidates will be asked to sing at sight, accompanied by the examiner, part of a simple anthem or song, choosing a suitable tempo and giving careful attention to dynamics, phrasing and articulation. The piece may be in any key up to five sharps or flats, with any simple or compound time signature, and may include ties and dotted notes. The key chord and starting note will be given. Two attempts are allowed. Candidates may study the music for up to half a minute before their first attempt.

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

Candidates will be asked to:

- Clap the rhythm of a 2-bar phrase played twice, the pulse first being indicated.
- Sing back as an echo a short phrase, in the candidate's vocal range, which the examiner has played twice. The key chord and tonic will be sounded, and the pulse indicated, before the excerpt begins.
- Sing, as requested, the middle or lowest note of a triad, which will be played twice, and identify the triad as major or minor. The triad will be in closed position in any inversion.
- Sing the following intervals above a given key note: major or minor 3rd, major or minor 6th, perfect 4th or 5th. Two or three examples will be required, within the candidate's vocal range.

Using one of the prepared pieces from Section A as a starting point, questions will then be asked about

- notes of the treble and bass staves, including leger lines
- time values of notes and rests including tied and dotted notes
- time signatures (simple and compound time)
- key signatures (of major and minor keys up to 5 sharps and 5 flats)
- commonly-used Italian terms and musical symbols

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

1. Understanding of prepared anthem

Candidates will be asked **two** questions about their prepared anthem. Topics will be selected from:

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

In addition to the typical questions given above at Bronze standard, questions at Silver standard might be:

'Give an example where the music of your piece varies to reflect the meaning of the text.'

'In which musical period did this composer live?'

'Name a piece written around the same time, by a different composer, and say whether it is similar.'

2. Understanding of a contrasting anthem

Candidates should give the examiner a short spoken account of a chosen, contrasting, piece selected from those in the RSCM Silver Collection, following the outline given in their red *Voice for Life* book. (They may bring, and refer to, notes on this.) The examiner will then ask **one** straightforward question about the music or its background.

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 training material for this section 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 Silver Award. With their application, candidates must present a written testimonial from their choir trainer, counter-signed by the vicar/minister/head teacher/director of music, confirming their commitment to the choir.

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

1. Bible

Candidates should show their knowledge, and be prepared to discuss the biblical origins, of any two of the following liturgical texts as chosen by the examiner: *Our Father, Holy holy holy, Glory to God, Lamb of God, Magnificat, Nunc dimittis.*

2. Liturgy

- a) Candidates will be asked to describe the structure, and main sung parts, of the form of eucharist, or communion service, with which they are familiar. They may bring, and refer to, a service book or card.
- b) Candidates should choose one anthem, and a psalm, hymn or worship song, both suitable for one season (e.g., Advent) or festival (e.g., Christ the King) celebrated in their church. They should be able to explain the significance of their choices, and to relate them to a suitable Bible reading for the festival or season chosen. *(They should bring two copies of their chosen pieces).*
- c) The examiner will ask straightforward questions on the meaning and significance of **two** further seasons or festivals, and ask the candidate to name a suitable piece of music which might be sung (by singing group, choir or congregation) during that season or festival.

3. Ministry

Candidates will be asked to explain, with reference to a different chosen piece of music, how music helps people to pray. They should prepare comments on both the music and the words, and show awareness of the choir's contribution to the worship of their church. *(They should bring two copies of their chosen piece).*

NB: Candidates are not expected to perform any examples in Section E, but they may refer to their copies of the chosen music. Their answers may vary according to their age and experience, and be expressed in straightforward language.