

## BISHOPS' CHORISTER AWARD

The purpose of this award is to encourage musicianship, loyalty, and a growing awareness of faith, in choristers, and to give a tangible recognition of the attainment of such a standard.

### ADMINISTRATION

1. The award is open to all choristers in church or school choirs within the area covered by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brentwood and the Anglican Diocese of Chelmsford. This award is also open to choristers of other denominations in this area, and to individual church singers and cantors.
2. There is no age limit on candidates for this Award. Candidates for this Award (validated at RSCM Silver Standard) are encouraged to complete 'Voice for Life' RED level as preparation for entry.
3. The examination should take about 30 minutes for each Part, with the time allocated to each section in proportion to the marks available. Candidates will be offered a warm-up time for Part One in the examination room prior to the commencement of the examination.
4. The examination is held twice a year in late Spring and late Autumn in Brentwood and/or Chelmsford.
5. Application for entry. Careful note must be made of the following requirements: Applications must be:-
  - i. made by the choir-trainer, in the case of choir choristers, who should give assurance with respect to regular attendance, diligent work, reliability, example to other choristers, and qualities of leadership. Candidates over the age of 16yrs can enter themselves or be entered by the choir trainer.
  - ii. endorsed by the Parish Priest/Minister. With regard to Part Two (Religious Knowledge), such endorsement is still required even if the tuition of the candidate has been delegated to another person.
  - iii. Supported by a parent or bona fide guardian, for candidates under the age of 16yrs, as declared by their signature. Candidates who are over the age of 16yrs can enter themselves, or be entered by the choir trainer. However, in both cases the reference from the parish priest or minister is required.

NB: On signing the entry form candidates, their trainers and representatives are deemed to be accepting the entry conditions and the examiners' judgements.

6. The cost of entry for each candidate is £20 and should be enclosed with the application form. Cheques should be made payable to "Bishops' Chorister Award".
7. It is now a requirement that candidates should provide their own accompanist. If there is a problem with this, the Awards Administrator should be informed as soon as possible.
8. The closing dates for entry for the examination in each year are 31st March for the Spring session and 30th September for the Autumn session. Please note these dates may be subject to variation, dependent upon the actual date of the examination fixed in a particular year. Late entries will not be accepted.
9. The completed project for the Religious Knowledge section must be submitted to the Administrator, as directed on the application form, at the time of entry. The Project will be assessed for presentation and neatness, and for the extent of its content in compliance with the syllabus, using the following minimum requirements:-
  - a. The Project must be securely and neatly bound; the candidates name and church must be on the front cover.
  - b. The Project must adhere to the syllabus requirements
  - c. The Project must be neatly arranged and legible.

This assessment will be carried out by a validated examiner, usually that one examining for the next session, and the Award Administrator Projects that meet these minimum requirements will be retained. Candidates are assured that, at examination, they will not be further questioned on presentation or neatness. However candidates will be questioned on the meaning and understanding of what they have written in the Project, as defined in Part Two section B.

The quality of presentation will, however, be commented upon in the 'General Remarks' box on the report sheet.

If the project does not meet the above minimum requirements then it will be returned to the candidate, with helpful and constructive comments, for revision. The candidate may then present at a subsequent session of examinations. An administration charge of £5 will be made and the balance of the entry fee returned.

10. An examiner's report will be prepared for each candidate, for which an A4 envelope stamped and addressed to the choir-trainer must be supplied. Examination results cannot be given over the telephone.
11. Successful candidates will be presented with their Award Certificate at the annual presentation service in either Brentwood Cathedral or Chelmsford Cathedral on a date to be notified to the candidates. Their names will be entered in the Awards' record book, which is displayed at the Award Ceremony. They will be entitled to wear the Bishops' Chorister medallion which can be purchased at the price indicated in the results letter.
12. All cheques should be made payable to 'Bishops' Chorister Award'.
13. Prospective candidates, together with those supporting their application, are encouraged to attend one or both of the Training sessions, as advertised, prior to each examination date.
14. Should there be any serious mitigating circumstances which might affect the candidate's performance at examination these must be made known to the Administrator as soon as possible before the examination in order that appropriate action if any, may be taken.

## **EXAMINATION REGULATIONS**

The examination is in two parts-

i) **MUSIC - Performance**

- Sight-singing, ear tests, and viva voce.

ii) **RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE.**

1. The maximum marks for each test are shown against each test. In order to pass the candidate must achieve 60% of the available marks in each Part of the examination. Successful candidates will be classified as follow:-  
**Pass** - at least 60% of the total available marks in each Part of the examination. (60 in Music, 30 in Religious Knowledge)  
**Merit** - a Pass in both Parts and a total of at least 115 marks in both Parts obtained at one session  
**Distinction** - a Pass in both Parts and a total of 125 marks in both Parts obtained at one session
2. Should a candidate fail in just ONE part, that part may be re-taken at not more than two subsequent examinations upon written application to the Awards Administrator. A small fee will be payable for a re-sit and this will be indicated in the results letter.
3. Candidates must bring to the examination one extra copy of all the prepared work, the hymn book, psalter, chant book, anthem, and Bible for use by the examiners, and the attendance notice to be given to the Administrator.
4. The project is a requirement of the Religious Knowledge section and is to be completed by all candidates. It should be submitted to the Administrator as directed on the application form. (Paragraph 8 in Administration section also refers)
5. If the prospective candidate suffers from dyslexia, the choir-trainer should make this known, in writing, at the time of application. Dyslexic candidates should provide documentation from an authoritative body: i.e. Educational Psychologist, or teacher with RSA (SpLD) Diploma. If the choir-trainer is made aware after the application has been submitted that a candidate is dyslexic, s/he should contact the Administrator in sufficient time prior to the closing date for the session of the examination. The related areas of disability may then be discussed and any appropriate allowances made for the individual concerned. Specific arrangements available for dyslexic candidates are detailed in the Award's Policy and Guidelines for Examining Dyslexic Candidates, available from the Administrator on request. Any special provision made for individual candidates will not jeopardise the integrity of the examination and, once made, the candidate will be assessed as found on the day of the examination.

### **6. APPEALS PROCEDURE**

Choir trainers are asked to understand that, in the interests of preserving the value of the awards to candidates who win them, and to maintain reasonable equivalence with similar awards in other areas, it is necessary to set defined standards for succeeding in these awards. Unfortunately it is occasionally the case that a candidate, however well prepared, does not come up to the required level. It should also be remembered that, whilst examiners do their best to put choristers at ease, candidates may occasionally not perform as well as expected on the examination day. In entering for an award, the candidate and Choir Trainer are deemed to accept the judgement of the examiners. In exceptional circumstances appeals may be considered according to the following procedure.

1. Appeals must be made in writing to the Administrator by the person who entered the candidate, setting out in detail the grounds on which the appeal is lodged.
2. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES IS THE EXAMINER TO BE CONTACTED DIRECTLY.**
3. To cover expenses, appeals must be accompanied by a fee of £10 (the cheque to be made payable to Bishops" Chorister Award). In the event that the appeal is successful the fee will be refunded.
4. Appeals must be lodged within 7 days of receiving the results. This is to ensure that the circumstances of the examination remain fresh in everyone"s memory.
5. Appeals which simply question the mark awarded, without given grounds, will not be accepted. Two broad grounds for appeal which may be typically considered are:
  - i. the candidate being expected to do something which is outside the scope of the syllabus, or
  - ii. clear inconsistency between the written comments and the marks awarded.
6. If an appeal is received, it will be considered by the Administrator, the Chairman and the Examiner. One of two outcomes will result:
  - i. the mark originally awarded may be confirmed, or
  - ii. the candidate may be offered a re-examination with a different examiner at a mutually convenient time. The outcome of any such re-examination will be deemed final.
7. The Administrator will notify the outcome of the appeal, in writing, to the person who lodged the appeal. The target time for resolving appeals is 21 days from date of receipt.
8. In the event that the appeal outcome is 6 (i) above, a final appeal may be made in writing to the Chairman of the Bishops" Chorister Award (address on application) setting out in detail the grounds on which the appeal is lodged, no later than 7 days after receiving the outcome of the first appeal. The Chairman will appoint an appropriate independent adviser to assess the grounds for the final appeal. A response will be issued by the adviser, whose decision is final. If the appeal is successful a re-examination - without further leave to appeal - , or alternatively a full refund of the entry fee, will be offered. In the event that the Chairman is the examiner involved, then the Committee of the Bishops" Chorister Award will nominate an appropriate deputy.
9. Appeals will be considered only for candidates who have failed. No appeal will be considered regarding the level of mark awarded to a candidate who has passed.

# SYLLABUS

## Part One - Music

### Performance

#### A. HYMN

Candidates should sing three verses (of their own choice and in their own voice part) from a prepared hymn - the verses having more than four lines. The third verse to be sung unaccompanied.

#### B. PSALM

- i. Prepare eight verses of a psalm to be sung to an Anglican double chant from a psalter of the candidate's choice, or  
four verses with Antiphon of a responsorial psalm, or  
up to eight verses and Gloria of a psalm to a plainsong tone.
- ii. Then to the same chant or tone sing four verses of a different psalm chosen by the examiner from the candidate's book.

#### C. ANTHEM, MOTET, CANTICLE, OR SERVICE SETTING

Candidates are to prepare the whole, of their own voice part, of one anthem, motet, canticle, or service setting specified in the music list for the respective year. Please note that a new list is produced at the beginning of every calendar year, and is therefore only effective for the two examinations of the year in which it is produced. The examiner will ask the candidate to sing all or part of the piece. Marks awarded will take account of the level of difficulty of the music, but more weight will be given to interpretation and musicality.

*NB: COPIES OF ALL MUSIC MUST BE PROVIDED FOR THE EXAMINER. IN THE EVENT OF COPIES NOT BEING PROVIDED THE CANDIDATE MAY LOSE MARKS.*

Throughout the above tests, the examiner will be looking for:

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

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

### Musical Skills and Understanding

#### D. SIGHT-SINGING

The candidate will be asked to sing unaccompanied tests to a vowel sound. Before each test the examiner will play the key chord and first note, wait while the candidate looks through the music and then play once more the key chord and first note. The candidate will then be expected to sing continuously. More marks will be gained, the less assistance needed from the piano.

The tests will be, in their own voice part -

- i. a double chant in a major or minor key.

- ii. four bars of a hymn tune in a major key.
- iii. four bars of the lower part of a two part tune provided by the examiner, with accompaniment, within the candidate's vocal range. The examiner will first play the four bars of the tune to the candidate while the candidate follows the lower line, then give the starting note.

#### E. EAR TESTS

- i. clap the rhythmic pattern of a short melody; the examiner will play the passage twice.
- ii. sing a short melody; the key chord and passage will be played twice by the examiner.
- iii. sing an interval of a major or minor 3rd or 6th; perfect 4th or 5th or octave, above a given key note.
- iv. sing as requested by the examiner the lower, middle, or upper note of a triad, in root or first inversion., and then identify the triad as major or minor.

#### F. VIVA VOCE

The examiner will show the candidate a piece of music and ask questions which will test the candidate's understanding of some or all of the following:

major and minor key signatures up to five accidentals ,note values; time signatures, simple and compound,; some common Italian terms; letter names of treble and bass clef notes; musical signs.

The candidate will then be asked simple questions on repertoire, i.e. the candidate's chosen test piece. The questions will include:-

- a little knowledge about the composer
- the style of the period
- the meaning of the text
- an appropriate time for its use in Church.
- another piece by the composer
- another piece in the same style

Candidates for this Award (validated to RSCM Silver Standard) and their choir trainers are advised to refer to the section on repertoire knowledge, page 192- 214, in the Voice for Life Choir Trainers book (published 2004)), including some sample answers at RED level on pp 204 - 206. This material will be the point of reference for examiners.

### TOTAL MARKS FOR PART ONE: 100 (60)

## Part Two - Religious Knowledge

The candidate's denomination and tradition will be taken into account in every part of this section.

#### A. BIBLE

The candidate should choose, and prepare to read aloud, a section from the Bible selected from the list of passages for this Award. The examiner will ask about the meaning of the text. The candidate will also be expected to have basic knowledge of the Bible, its content and order. Any translation normally used in the candidate's church is acceptable.

#### B. PROJECT

The attention of the Parish Priest/Minister endorsing the application is drawn to Paragraph 5 (ii) of section on Administration. The prime purpose of the Project is to show that the candidate understands the choral service which he or she most regularly attends.

In the Project the candidate should include:-

- something personal about what it means to him/her to be in the choir and a member of the Church family. (e.g. a sense of service to the community in worship ;satisfaction and fulfilment in working with others; a feeling of belonging).
- an explanation of the shape of the service and show that he/she understands the meaning of its different parts. (e.g. at Eucharist/Mass/Communion, Evensong, Evening prayer, Matins - the main choral and spoken

elements, their essential meanings, the order in which they come.)

- his/her understanding of how the local Church family is organised and how it relates to the wider Christian Church. (e.g. the various ordained and lay ministers in their parish, and their roles and responsibilities).
- how the Church building and furnishings relate to the liturgy . The style and layout of the building and positioning of its furnishings

To enable this to be assessed the examiner will question the candidate accordingly. The project submitted will be of the standard required of the candidate's year in school or age .The examiner will be aware of the candidate's age.

The Project may be either handwritten or word-processed. It should contain a minimum of 12 pages of text, and be illustrated with drawings or photographs.

### **C. LITURGY**

- i. The candidate will be required to show some knowledge of the Christian year and the meaning of some of the most important days in the Church's calendar. e.g. Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Epiphany, Ascension
- ii. The candidate will be asked to identify and explain the meaning of certain words commonly used in their own church, e.g. pulpit, altar, minister, priest, deacon, diocese, nave, lectern, ambo, Mass, Eucharist, Communion, etc.
- iii. The candidate will be asked questions about the purpose of music in worship and how the choir, organist and other musicians contribute to the worship of the community
- iv. Candidates will be asked to explain the origins in the Bible of two of the following liturgical texts, chosen by the examiner:

Our Father; Holy, Holy, Holy; Glory to God; Lamb of God; Magnificat; Nunc Dimittis.

- v. Candidates should choose beforehand one hymn, anthem or worship song suitable for one season (e.g. Advent) or Festival (e.g. Christ the King) celebrated in their Church. Candidates will be asked to explain the significance of their choice and of the Festival or Season chosen. (Candidates should bring two copies of their chosen piece).

**TOTAL MARKS FOR PART TWO: 50 (30)**

# CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT OF BISHOPS' CHORISTER AWARD

(Validated at RSCM Silver Standard)

## MUSIC

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

### 1. **Posture & presentation**

Good candidates will:

- Stand and hold their music well throughout the examination.

Poor candidates may:

- Bury their heads in their music and sing into their copies.
- 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.
- Be able to sing a legato line without aspirating.
- Be able to sing wide leaps without breaking the flow of the phrase.
- Be able to move with ease and control throughout the range.
- Be able to sustain crescendos and diminuendos without forcing the sound or losing tone quality.
- Use vibrato appropriately to colour the sound.

Poor candidates may:

- Produce uneven breathy tone.
- Be unable to sustain to the end of a phrase.
- Strain for high or low notes.
- Have weak or unprojected tone.
- Have poor diction.
- Be unable to sing a legato line without aspirating each note.
- Be unable to sing wide leaps without stopping the voice.
- Show lack of control over vibrato.
- Overuse the glottal stop to attack notes.

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

Good candidates will:

- Sing notes and rhythms accurately and with reliable 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 performed.
- 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 repertoire.
- Falter and appear to lack confidence.
- Be careless with the placing of consonants and the change of vowel in diphthongs.

## **MUSICAL KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING**

### **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 when 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**

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

Good candidates will:

- Demonstrate their knowledge of notation and theory by singing their repertoire and performing sight-reading and aural tests with a high degree of accuracy.
- Observe common Italian terms, musical symbols and dynamic markings and be able to explain what they mean if asked.
- Show their understanding of intervals and triads, and be able to pitch and identify them in the aural tests.

Poor candidates may:

- Demonstrate a poor understanding of notation and theory by making a large number of errors when singing repertoire and performing 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 or triads in aural tests.

## **REPERTOIRE**

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.
- Be able to compare and contrast any piece they sing with another setting of a similar text, or with a piece by another composer of the same period.

Poor candidates may:

- Only be able to offer simple observations on the repertoire and show little background knowledge about the text, composer or musical style.
- Be unable to make comparisons with other pieces.

## **RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE**

Good candidates will, within their accepted Projects and throughout Part Two:

- Deliver a clear reading of their Bible passage, with good posture and engagement with the listener.
- Show good understanding of the meaning of the text; a basic knowledge of the Bible, its content and order.
- 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 community.
- Be able to give examples of music suitable for their chosen occasions or seasons.
- Have a comprehensive knowledge of the seasons (e.g., Lent) and major festivals (e.g., Ascension) in the Church's year and understand the pattern and format of services in their church.

Poor candidates may:

- Give an indistinct and hurried delivery of their Bible reading, with poor posture and minimal engagement with the listener.
- Show poor understanding of the meaning of the text and a scant knowledge of the Bible, its content and order.
- Appear not to have considered their role in the choir.
- Demonstrate a poor awareness of musical ministry within a church or the importance of music in the community.
- Be unable to make suitable repertoire suggestions for specific occasions or seasons.
- Be unable to answer questions on the Church's year or the format of services.

**Bishops' Chorister Award**  
(Validated at RSCM Silver Standard)

**Requirements for 2012:**

MUSIC

Candidates are to choose any anthem from the RSCM Silver Collection Book. This gives candidates a choice from 30. Candidates and Choir Trainers should be aware that the anthem is the important thing, not buying the book as such, as many choirs have individual copies of the various anthems, and these are quite satisfactory to use for the examination.

BIBLE READING

1. Genesis 17.1-7
2. Isaiah 42.1-9
3. Mark 1.1-11
4. Acts 7.55-8.3

**Church Music Awards for Choristers  
under the patronage of the  
Bishops of Brentwood and Chelmsford**

To: Mr Bill Brooks, Administrator  
12 Walden Way  
Hornchurch  
Essex  
RM11 2LB

**BISHOPS' CHORISTER AWARD  
(validated to RSCM Silver Standard)**

I (name of choir trainer) (BLOCK CAPITALS) .....

Name of Choir .....  
wish to enter the following candidate(s) in accordance with the regulations and requirements

for the examination on Saturday ..... (please enter selected date)

Name of Candidate: (a) .....

(b) .....

Date of birth: (a) ..... (b) .....

Voice: (a) ..... (b) .....

**For applicants under 16 years of age**, this application must be supported by the signature of parent or bona fide guardian.

Signature: (a) ..... (b) .....

Title and composer of anthem, motet, canticle or service setting

.....  
Choice of Responsorial Psalm (if chosen)

.....  
Signature of choir trainer .....

Address .....

Telephone number ..... date .....

I am satisfied that the candidate(s) has/have been prepared for Part Two as required by the syllabus.

Signature of parish priest/minister..... date .....

**NB: The Project required for Part Two must be submitted with this application form, as required by the syllabus, to The Administrator, Bishops' Chorister Award, The Cathedral Office, New Street, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1TY**

**Church Music Awards for Choristers  
under the patronage of the  
Bishops of Brentwood and Chelmsford**

To: Mr Bill Brooks, Administrator  
12 Walden Way  
Hornchurch  
Essex  
RM11 2LB

**BISHOPS' CHORISTER AWARD  
(validated to RSCM Silver Standard)**

I (name of applicant) (BLOCK CAPITALS) .....

Address .....

.....

Telephone number .....

Name of Choir .....

wish to enter for the examination on Saturday ..... (please enter selected date)  
in accordance with the regulations and requirements.

Date of birth: .....

Voice: .....

Title and composer of anthem, motet, canticle or service setting

.....

Choice of Responsorial Psalm (if chosen)

.....

Signature of applicant .....

I am satisfied that the candidate(s) has/have been prepared for Part Two as required by the syllabus.

Signature of parish priest/minister..... date .....

**NB: The Project required for Part Two must be submitted with this application form, as required by the syllabus, to The Administrator, Bishops' Chorister Award, The Cathedral Office, New Street, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1TY**