

DIOCESES OF BRENTWOOD & CHELMSFORD

Deans' Chorister Award (RSCM Bronze Standard)

SECTION A - GOOD USE OF THE VOICE

1 Hymn singing

Maximum 15 marks (9 to pass)

Candidates should sing three verses (melody or, at their choice, their own voice part) from a prepared hymn of four-line verses. The second verse is to be sung unaccompanied.

2 Psalm singing

Maximum 15 marks (9 to pass)

Candidates are to 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 refrain of a responsorial psalm
or
- eight verses of a psalm to a plainsong tone.

3 Prepared item

Maximum 20 marks (12 to pass)

Candidates are to prepare the whole, of the melody or their own voice part, of one of the pieces specified below. The examiner will ask the candidate to sing all or part of the piece and will accompany the candidate.

A Gaelic blessing - Rutter*

Ave verum corpus - Elgar*

Come Holy Ghost - Attwood

Day by day - How*

O mysterium ineffabile - Lallouette*

Praise O praise our God and King - How*

Sing choirs of heaven (the Easter song of praise) - Shephard*

Sing of the Lord's goodness - Sands§

Steal away (arr. Weaver)*§

* in RSCM: the Bronze Collection

§ in RSCM: Songs for life, vol.I

Throughout the above tests the examiner will be looking for:

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

SECTION B - MUSICAL SKILLS AND UNDERSTANDING

1 Sight-reading

Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)

Candidates will be asked:

- a) 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 will be allowed, if needed.
- b) to sing at sight, with a simple accompaniment played by the examiner, a short melody of about ten notes, in a major key of up to three sharps or flats, to a vowel or sol-fa (at the candidate's choice). The key chord and first note will be given. A second attempt will be allowed, if needed.

2 Aural tests and

Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)

3 Further questions

Candidates will be expected:

- a) to clap the rhythm of a 2-bar phrase played twice, the pulse being given beforehand;
- b) to sing (as an echo, and in strict time) three simple 2-bar phrases, each heard only once. The key chord and the tonic will be sounded, and the pulse indicated, before the excerpt begins;
- c) to identify the following intervals, each heard not more than twice (both notes played simultaneously): major 3rd, minor 3rd, perfect 4th, perfect 5th. Two or three examples will be given.

Using the prepared items as a starting point, questions will be asked to ascertain candidates' knowledge of:

- a) notes of either the treble or bass stave, at the candidate's choice
- b) time values of notes
- c) simple time signatures
- d) major key signatures (up to three sharps or flats)
- e) simple Italian musical terms and signs

SECTION C – REPERTOIRE

Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)

Candidates will be asked questions, appropriate to their age and experience, on their prepared pieces. These should include:

- a) Text and music (e.g. origin, style, meaning, how the music reflects the text);
- b) Context (historical, musical, liturgical if relevant).

Candidates and choir-trainers should refer to the section on Repertoire knowledge, pp.192-214, in the Voice for Life Choir Trainers' book, including some sample answers at Dark Blue level on pp.202-3, as this material will be the reference point for the examiners.

SECTION D - BELONGING TO THE CHOIR

There is no formal examination for this section and no marks are allocated. It is, however, a vital part of the Deans' Award. With their application, candidates must supply a written testimonial from their choir trainer, signed by the vicar/minister/head teacher/director of music, confirming their commitment to the choir.

SECTION E – REPERTOIRE

Maximum 20 marks (12 to pass)

1 Bible

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

2 Liturgy

- a) Candidates will be asked to describe the sung parts of the form of evening prayer or the eucharist (or similar service) with which they are familiar.
- b) Candidates should choose beforehand one hymn, anthem or worship song suitable for one church season or festival celebrated in their church. Candidates will be asked to explain the significance of their choice and of the season or festival chosen. (Candidates should bring two copies of their chosen piece).

3 Ministry

Candidates will be asked to describe what motivates and inspires them as singers in a Church choir.