



## News Release from the Royal School of Church Music

### **“OUTRIGHT” WINNER OF COMPOSITION CONTEST FROM USA**

**A choral conductor from Ohio USA, has won the 2008 Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) annual composition contest, in memory of Dr Harold Smart. The entry by Jon Simsic, director of the Salem Community Theater Youth Chorus was, in the words of the adjudicators, “the one clear and outright winner.”**

The brief for this year’s Harold Smart Competition was to write an anthem for up to four choral parts on an agricultural theme, including harvest thanksgiving and/or caring for the earth. Entrants were not allowed to identify themselves on their manuscripts.

Jon Simsic’s winning anthem *Harvest Hymn* adapted a poem by Sarojini Naidu from her collection, “The Golden Threshold,” and includes Hindu deity references which Simsic adapted to the Holy Trinity. Simsic wins a prize of £100, and a performance of his work in Salisbury Cathedral in Autumn 2009. Commenting on his award, Jon Simsic is honoured to receive recognition from the adjudicators. *“It’s humbling to say the least,”* he said. *“When I received the congratulatory letter in the mail, I figured it was just another letter of rejection! To have one’s work recognized by the RSCM and the prestigious adjudicators as well as the performance opportunity at Salisbury Cathedral is indeed thrilling!”*

In their adjudication, David Halls, Organist and Master of the Choristers at Salisbury Cathedral, and Tim Ruffer, the RSCM’s Head of Publishing, state that Simsic’s work *“shows a sophistication rarely seen previously in this competition. This is a challenging piece, even by Cathedral standards, not least because of the organ part that requires both an excellent organist and an instrument capable of the varied textures. The vocal writing, despite the modern idiom, is exemplary, never straying beyond comfort zones, apart maybe from the final chord of exuberance.”*

Ends  
22 December 2008

### **Notes for Editors**

**The Royal School of Church Music (RSCM)** is an educational charity and promotes the best use of music in worship, church life, and the wider community. The RSCM also publishes music and training resources, and organises courses, short workshops and activities. With over 8,500 affiliates, members and friends in over 40 countries it is an international network, supported by over 750 volunteers and small team of staff based throughout the UK. More at [www.rscm.com](http://www.rscm.com)

**For further immediate information about this annual composition competition go to**  
<http://www.rscm.com/publications/haroldsmart.php>

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