



**Chester Area**

**General Information and Syllabus**

**Dean's & Bishop's Adult Awards**

**Validated as**

**Bronze and Silver Awards**

**2007**



## Chester Area

# DEAN'S AND BISHOP'S ADULT CHORISTER AWARDS

## BRONZE AND SILVER AWARDS

### ENTRY CONDITIONS

1. The purpose of this document is to explain, in detail, the general information, regulations, and syllabus, relating to these awards. If you require further copies of the syllabus or entry forms, please contact the Award Administrator at the address shown overleaf.
2. Please read the information carefully. You will, no doubt, at some stage wish to meet with your choir trainer to discuss the various parts of the syllabus. If you then need further advice on any aspect of the information, please contact the Administrator.
3. The **aims** of the Awards are:
  - to encourage and develop a good standard of musicianship in adult choristers
  - to give recognition of the attainment of such a standard.

Candidates should be fully involved in church and choir life and set a good example to junior choristers.

4. Awards will be presented to successful candidates at a special service in Chester Cathedral. A medallion will also be available for those who wish to purchase one.
5. The scheme is open to members of affiliated choirs in the Chester Area. Candidates should normally have been members of an RSCM-affiliated choir for at least two years. Transfer will be acceptable if clearly documented. Young male choristers should have commenced singing alto, tenor or bass. Female choristers **must** have passed their 15th birthday at the time of enrolling. **There is no upper age limit.**

Testimonials giving assurance of regular and punctual attendance, dependability and reliability, personality, ability to organise oneself, and co-operation with other choir and church members must be completed by the choir trainer and the Parish Priest or Minister and sent with the application form. This forms part of the evidence required for Section D of the syllabus.

6. After you have read through the information and made any necessary enquiries, you should fill in the application form. Then pass it to your choir trainer, who will add his/her testimonial. Also ask your Parish Priest or Minister to complete the appropriate section of the form before forwarding it, with your fee, to the Administrator at the address shown below. Within a few days you should receive the workbook and further guidelines to enable you to make a start on the Award.
7. The current enrolment fee for the Dean's Award is £20.00. A further fee of £22.00 is payable when embarking on the Bishop's Award. Cheques should be made payable to **RSCM Chester Area**. The enrolment fee includes assessment for the appropriate Award. The fees are subject to review on an annual basis. **Please note that the Dean's Award must be completed before enrolment for the Bishop's Award can be accepted.**
8. At no time should you feel you are without help and advice. Your choir trainer or organist may be able to help with certain sections and your Parish Priest or Minister may also be able to advise. Further help or advice may be obtained from the Administrator.
9. You are responsible for your own progress. There is no pre-determined examination date. Assessment sessions are arranged between yourself and the Administrator. There is no time limit for completion either, but it should be possible for candidates to complete the Dean's Award in twelve months, and the Bishop's Award in a further nine to twelve months.
10. Training events to cover various aspects of the syllabus will be arranged each year. These will be advertised in the regular mailings to correspondents and will not be restricted to those taking the Adult Chorister Awards, but open to all. They are **not** included in the administration fee and there will be a charge at the current RSCM rate.
11. The Voice for Life scheme provides much helpful advice for candidates and is a valuable resource for preparation for the awards at both levels. In particular, the following material is recommended:  
 For Dean's Award:  
     *Singer's Workbook – Dark Blue Level (RSCM stock code F010)*  
     *RSCM Bronze Collection (RSCM stock code D0091)* for repertoire  
 For Bishop's Award:  
     *Singer's Workbook – Red Level (RSCM stock code F0103)*  
     *RSCM Silver Collection (RSCM stock code B0111)* for repertoire  
 For Choir Trainers:  
     *Choir Trainer's Book (RSCM stock code F0100)*  
 These books and copies of music are available from RSCM Music Direct, tel 0845 021 7726, musicdirect@rscm.com, www.rscm.com/shop

Contact details for the Award Administrator:

Mrs Ester Harries,  
 8 Rimsdale Close, Wistaston, Crewe, Cheshire, CW2 6RS

Tel: 01270 567096  
 Mobile: 07931 584395

## ASSESSMENT CONDITIONS

1. The candidate should contact the Award Administrator to request an assessment. The request will be forwarded to the Assessor who will make an appointment with the candidate at a time which is mutually convenient.
2. An accompanist should normally be provided by the candidate for the repertoire items in Section A. When this section has been completed, the accompanist should leave the room.
3. Copies of the prepared pieces and any other relevant material should be provided for the Assessor's use.
4. The use of illegal photocopies will automatically disqualify a candidate.
5. On signing the application form, candidates (and their representatives and trainers) are deemed to be accepting the entry conditions and the Assessor's judgements.
6. The result of the assessment will be sent to the candidate by post, usually within two weeks of the assessment.

## STRUCTURE AND DISTRIBUTION OF MARKS

There are five sections, only four of which are assessed. (Section D is satisfied by means of appropriate testimonials to be submitted with the candidate's application and evidence of regular attendance during the period of preparation.) The marks will be distributed across these sections according to the following scheme:

	<b>Dean's Award</b>	<b>Bishop's Award</b>
A Using the voice well	50%	50%
B Musical skills and understanding	20%	20%
C Repertoire	10%	10%
D Belonging to the choir	[testimonials]	
E Choir in context	20%	20%

The pass mark is 60%. In order to pass, candidates should demonstrate consistency throughout the assessment, though a pass mark in every section is not required. Successful candidates may be classified as follows:

85%+	Distinction / highly commended
75%+	Merit / commended
60%+	Pass

## SYLLABUS FOR DEAN'S ADULT AWARD

### Section A Using the voice well

In this section, prepare to sing a hymn, a psalm and **two** further contrasting pieces as indicated in the list below. You should sing your normal voice part in all the items.

1. *Hymn Singing* *Maximum 15 marks (9 to pass)*

Sing three verses from a prepared hymn (of four-line verses). The second verse should be sung unaccompanied.

2. *Psalm Singing* *Maximum 15 marks (9 to pass)*

Prepare and sing psalmody to music of your own choice. This may be eight verses and a Gloria to Anglican chant or to a plainsong tone, or the whole of a responsorial psalm.

3. *Prepared items* *Maximum 20 marks (12 to pass)*

Consult with your choir trainer and select two items which you have already performed or might potentially perform in your own choir. The selection may include Anthems, Canticles or Service settings. Marks awarded will take account of the level of difficulty of the music, but more weight will be given to interpretation and musicality.

#### *Indicative Repertoire*

The following list of examples is not intended to be prescriptive, but gives an indication of the required standard:

<i>Come Holy Ghost</i> (Attwood)	<i>Steal Away</i> (arr. Weaver), in <i>Songs for Life 1</i>
<i>Praise O praise our God and King</i> (How)	<i>Sing choirs of heaven</i> (Shephard)
<i>Thou knowest, Lord</i> (Purcell)	<i>The Fruits of the Land</i> (Ogden), in <i>Songs for Life 1</i>
<i>A Gaelic blessing</i> (Rutter)	<i>Litany to the Holy Spirit</i> (Hurford)
<i>Day by Day</i> (How)	<i>Be Still, for the presence of the Lord</i> (Evans, arr. How, in <i>Sing With All My Soul</i> )

See also the *RSCM Bronze Collection*, (order ref D0091).

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

- a) Good 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.

## **Section B Musical skills and understanding**

### *1. Sight-reading / Speed of Learning* *Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)*

You 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.
- b) To sing, accompanied, a short melody (of about 10 notes), in a key of up to three sharps or flats, to a vowel or sol-fa (at the candidate's choice). A second attempt will be allowed.

### *2. Aural tests* *Maximum 5 marks (3 to pass)*

You will be expected to:

- a) Clap the rhythm pattern of a 2-bar phrase played twice.
- b) 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 before the excerpt begins.
- c) Identify the following intervals each heard not more than twice (both notes played simultaneously): major and minor 3rd, perfect 4th and 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.
- d) Sing a major or harmonic minor scale (ascending and descending) of one octave from a given starting note.

### *3. Further questions* *Maximum 5 marks (3 to pass)*

Using the prepared item as a starting point, questions will be asked to ascertain your knowledge of:

- a) Notes of the treble and bass clef
- b) Time values of notes
- c) Time signatures (simple time)
- d) Key signatures (up to three sharps and three flats)
- e) Simple Italian musical terms and common dynamic markings.

## **Section C Repertoire**

*Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)*

You will be asked questions on your prepared pieces. The topics for discussion will include:

- a) Text and music - how the music fits the words. Use your prepared hymn, or another hymn with which you are familiar, and find out how to choose an alternative tune. Consider the style and the mood of the chosen alternative and be prepared to discuss the choice briefly.
- b) The principle of pointing psalms. Read the preface in a pointed Psalter (with music) with which you are familiar and form some ideas about how the editor decided where to insert the pointing marks.

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

In addition to the testimonial submitted with the application, you should submit evidence of regular attendance during the time of preparation. The Choir trainer / Director of Music should sign section D1 in the Workbook prior to the assessment. It is expected that you shall normally have achieved an attendance record of 85% (or more), allowances being made for illness or family holidays.

You should also submit evidence of attendance at RSCM courses (section D2 in the Workbook). It is expected that you will attend at least **two** RSCM approved courses or events during the period of preparation for the Dean's Award. Candidates who participate in a full session of the RSCM Cathedral Singers will also qualify under this section.

## **Section E Choir in context**

*Maximum 20 marks (12 to pass)*

### *1. Liturgy*

Using a service which is familiar to you, talk about the structure and content of the service. You should know which parts are taken from the Bible, and the context of those passages.

### *2. Church Seasons*

Make a Calendar of the Christian Year, including the use of liturgical colours, as appropriate to your denomination. Include the main church Festivals (and Saints' Days) and explain the significance of these. The lesser festivals can be left out unless the dedication of your own church is named. You should be able to comment on the saint after whom the church is named (if appropriate). The form of the Calendar is up to you. It could take the form of a list or a diagrammatic chart.

### *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.

## SYLLABUS FOR BISHOP'S ADULT AWARD

### Section A Using the voice well

At this level, you should be expected to be familiar with pieces outside the repertoire of your own choir.

In this section, prepare and sing a hymn, a psalm and **two** further contrasting items as indicated in the list below. You should sing your own voice part in all the prepared items, where appropriate.

1. *Hymn Singing* *Maximum 15 marks (9 to pass)*

Sing three verses from a prepared hymn having verses more than four lines long. The second verse should be sung unaccompanied.

2. *Psalm Singing* *Maximum 15 marks (9 to pass)*

Prepare and sing eight verses and a Gloria from a psalm of your own choice to music of your own choice or the whole of a Responsorial Psalm. Some verses should be sung unaccompanied.

3. *Prepared items* *Maximum 20 marks (12 to pass)*

You are expected to present two contrasting items. One should be an actual solo piece, the other a vocal part from an anthem or service setting, and should be chosen after consultation with the Administrator. The pieces presented need not be difficult. Marks awarded will take account of the level of difficulty of the music, but more weight will be given to interpretation and musicality.

#### *Indicative Repertoire*

The following list of examples is not intended to be prescriptive, but gives an indication of the required standard:

<i>Cantate Domino</i> (Pitoni)	<i>By and by</i> (arr Weaver), in <i>Songs for Life 1</i>
<i>O thou the central orb</i> (Wood)	<i>Listen sweet dove</i> (Ives)
<i>All things bright and beautiful</i> (Rutter)	<i>O Lord, the maker</i> (Joubert)
<i>The great southland</i> (Bullock, arr. Weaver), in <i>Songs for Life 1</i>	

See also the *RSCM Silver Collection* (order ref B0111)

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

- a) Good 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.

## **Section B Musical skills and understanding**

1. *Sight-reading / Speed of Learning* *Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)*

You will be asked to sing at sight, and accompanied, 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, any simple or compound time signature, and may include ties and dotted notes.) The key chord and starting note will be given. Two attempts will be allowed.

2. *Aural tests* *Maximum 5 marks (3 to pass)*

You will be expected to:

- a) Clap the rhythm pattern of a two-bar phrase played twice.
- b) Sing back as an echo a short phrase which the examiner has played twice. The key chord and the tonic will be sounded before the excerpt begins.
- c) Sing, as requested, the lowest or middle note of a triad, which will be played twice, and identify the triad as major or minor. The triad will be in close position in any inversion.
- d) 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.

3. *Further questions* *Maximum 5 marks (3 to pass)*

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

- a) Notes of the treble and bass clef (including leger lines)
- b) Time values of notes and rests including tied and dotted notes
- c) Time signatures (simple and compound time)
- d) Key signatures (up to five sharps or flats)
- e) Construction of major and minor scales
- f) Commonly used Italian terms and musical symbols.

## **Section C Repertoire**

*Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)*

You will be asked questions on your prepared pieces and should display an understanding of the following areas:

- a) The historical context and the different styles of various periods of Church Music. You should be able to identify the main stylistic features and give some examples of key composers and their music from the different periods.
- b) The different methods of singing the psalms (i.e. plainsong, Anglican Chant, Gelineau, metrical, responsorial).

## Section D Belonging to the choir

In addition to the testimonial submitted with the application, you should submit evidence of regular attendance during the time of preparation. The Choir trainer / Director of Music should sign section D1 in the Workbook prior to the assessment. It is expected that you shall normally have achieved an attendance record of 85% (or more), allowances being made for illness or family holidays.

You should also submit evidence of attendance at RSCM courses (section D2 in the Workbook). It is expected that you will attend at least **three** RSCM approved Courses **or** a Three Day Course **or** a Residential course during the period of preparation for the Bishop's Award. Candidates who participate in a full session of the RSCM Cathedral Singers will also qualify under this section.

## Section E Choir in context

*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 requested 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 beforehand 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. Candidates must be ready to explain the significance of their choices and to relate them to a suitable Bible reading for the festival or season chosen. (*Candidates 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 for a choice of a suitable piece of music which might be sung (by choir or congregation) during each season or festival.

### 3. Ministry

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