



## News Release from the Royal School of Church Music

### Church music; top church musician calls for “imaginative partnerships”.

**As the Church of England (C of E) General Synod debates the Liturgical Commission’s Transforming Worship report this weekend in York, the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) will be urging the governing body to devote more attention to the training of both clergy and church musicians.**

In a presentation prior to the synod debate on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> July, Professor John Harper, the Director General of the RSCM will suggest that the vision of music to transform the church worship can sometimes be far from the present reality. To help overcome what he calls “the stultification of music done badly” in some churches, Professor Harper will tell delegates that this will either require significant resource or “imaginative partnerships” between the church, charities like the RSCM, and the education sector. He says “in the absence of funds, partnership is the only way forward.”

Speaking this week, Professor Harper (who serves as a consultant to the C of E’s Liturgical Commission) said, “There is a crying shortage of people willing to lead music in their churches and to do so effectively. This is something which can only be addressed by appropriate training of musicians and clergy, from basic skills through to serious study. And this is a long-term challenge.”

The RSCM (which this year celebrates its eightieth anniversary) is one of a handful of organisations that publishes resources and provides training for churches around the world. As the official (but unfunded) music agency of the Church of England since 1995, the RSCM has published a range of new musical materials for those C of E churches using Common Worship.

The Transforming Worship report says that with its three training programmes, the RSCM is “exceptionally well placed” to offer education and training to those involved in worship. These include the RSCM’s *Sacred Music Studies*, offered as a distance learning course, which gives a broad understanding of ministry, worship and music within the participant’s own church setting. A new programme, *Skills of the Church Musician*, to be launched later this year, will help equip parish music leaders with the specific skills necessary for services; something described in the Transforming Worship report as “a priority for many churches”. The RSCM’s *Voice for Life* is a training programme for singers of all ages, and is popular in many schools and churches all over the world.

Following the debate (on the evening of Sunday July 8<sup>th</sup>), the RSCM is inviting synod delegates to a buffet reception led by the Bishop of Salisbury, the Rt Revd David Stancliffe, himself a Vice President of the RSCM. During this session, the Director General, Professor John Harper will explain in further detail what training opportunities the RSCM can offer. “If music is to transform worship, we all have to commit to a long period of education, training and nurture. The RSCM with its strong network of expertise, is ready and willing to be one of the partners in that process. It’s a question of seizing opportunities and providing support both for church musicians and clergy alike, and being imaginative about it.”

Ends  
2 July 2007

### Notes for Editors

**You are welcome to send a representative to the Sunday evening RSCM event; if you wish to attend please contact Heather Bamber – contact details below. In order to reflect the synod debate, we regret the text of Professor Harper’s presentation will not be available in advance.**

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. For further information about the RSCM, go to the website [www.rscm.com](http://www.rscm.com)

Transforming Worship is a report for the July meeting of the General Synod in York by the Church of England Liturgical Commission; full text is available at <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/about/gensynod/agendas/gsl651a.rtf>.

**For further media enquiries contact:**

**Stuart Robinson:** RSCM Media Relations Organiser [srobinson@rscm.com](mailto:srobinson@rscm.com) 0871 288 1262 / 07831 827701

**Heather Bamber:** RSCM Marketing & Communications Administrator [hbamber@rscm.com](mailto:hbamber@rscm.com) 01722 424847