

RSCM Bishop of Southwell & Nottingham's Silver Award Syllabus

Examination Conditions

1. There is no age limit on candidates for this award.
2. The examination will take 35 minutes, with the time allocated to each section in proportion to the marks available. The examiner will be RSCM-validated. Solely for the purposes of examiner training and moderation, a recording may be made which shall remain the property of the RSCM.
3. An accompanist should normally be provided by the candidate. The examiner must not be expected to act as accompanist. After Section A of the examination has been completed, the accompanist should leave the examination room.
4. Candidates will be given somewhere to warm up before the examination.
5. Copies of all prepared pieces and any other relevant materials should be provided for the examiner's use.
6. The use of illegal photocopies will automatically disqualify a candidate.
7. The fee for this award is £20. Successful candidates will receive their marksheet by post and be presented with their Silver medallion and purple ribbon at the Diocesan Choirs Festival in October. Cheques should be payable to "RSCM Southwell & Notts. Area" and sent with the entry form to arrive by April 1st for the May session and August 1st for the September session to:
Mr. Peter Price. 35 Wadham Road, Woodthorpe, Nottingham. NG5 4JB. Tel: 0115 9524353,
email: pcprice@ntlworld.com
8. The RSCM reserves the right to refuse an examination entry without stating a reason. In such cases, the examination fee will be refunded in full.
9. In the event of non-attendance at an examination, through illness or emergency, an email or letter of explanation must be sent immediately to the organising officer. A refund, or credit slip for future entry, of up to 50% of the examination fee, may be issued at the discretion of the RSCM.
10. On signing the entry form, candidates (and their representatives and trainers) are deemed to be accepting the entry conditions, and the examiner's musical judgements.
11. The result of the examination will be sent to the candidate (or representative, as indicated) by post, usually within two weeks of the examination. Examiners will not divulge results at the time of the examination.
12. Any appeal, concerning either the conduct or the outcome of the examination, must be made in writing to RSCM Education, enclosing a copy of the marksheet and setting out in detail the grounds on which the appeal is lodged, no later than seven days after receiving the result. The examiner is not to be contacted directly. After due consultation, and not later than one month after receipt of the appeal, a response will be issued by the Head of Education & Training, whose decision is final. If the appeal is successful, a re-examination, or alternatively a full refund of the entry fee, will be offered.

Prerequisites

Candidates presented for this award should normally:

1. Have been regular members of an RSCM-affiliated choir or singing group for at least three years (transfer will be acceptable if clearly documented). If RSCM affiliation is not currently maintained, the candidate must instead be an RSCM individual member.
2. Have completed at least *Voice for Life* Red level.
3. Have achieved an RSCM Bronze standard singing award, or other equivalent award.
4. Submit, with their application, a written testimonial from their trainer, counter-signed by the vicar or minister (or head teacher or school director of music), confirming their commitment to the choir or singing group and general musical competence. (This corresponds to section D mentioned above.) This testimonial must also give details of RSCM singing courses or training events in which the candidate has participated.

Section A Using the voice well

1. Hymn Singing

Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)

Candidates should sing three verses from a prepared hymn, the tune being set to verses more than four lines long. The second verse should be sung unaccompanied. Singers may choose to sing some or all of their verses in harmony or in unison, having first informed the examiner.

2. Psalm Singing

Maximum 15 marks (9 to pass)

Candidates should prepare and sing psalmody (where relevant, their own voice part), to music of their own choice. This must be *either* a chosen portion of no less than 8 (but not more than 10) consecutive verses and the Gloria, sung to an Anglican double chant or to a plainsong tone, or the whole of a responsorial psalm. Candidates should select a short portion of their psalmody to sing unaccompanied. Marks awarded will take account of the accuracy of chanting, but will also give significant weight to the clarity, evenness of articulation and sensitivity of interpretation of the text.

3. Prepared anthem

Maximum 15 marks (9 to pass)

Candidates should consult with their trainer and select an item to sing from the **RSCM Silver Collection** (order ref B0111) or one of the songs listed below from **The English Anthem Collection, vol.2** (order ref B0031), which they have already performed or might potentially perform in their own choir or singing group. Other editions are acceptable. They must sing their own voice part, at the published pitch. Marks awarded will take account of the level of difficulty of the music, but more weight will be given to interpretation and musicality.

- Ave Maria (Lindley)
- The Father's love (Lole)
- My song is love unknown (Archer)

4. Prepared setting or song

Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)

Candidates should choose and prepare:

- either (a) any through-composed (not chanted or metrical) setting of the *Magnificat* or of the Holy Communion (*Gloria & Agnus Dei* only) from which the examiner will choose excerpts to be performed. Candidates should sing, where relevant, their own voice part;
- or (b) the complete melody line of a song, suitable for performance in worship. The song should:
- have a melodic range of around, or greater than, an octave
 - display rhythmic interest and subtlety, including dotted rhythms and/or syncopation
 - have 2 or more stanzas or sections, each not less than 16 bars in length.

Examples of suitable choices are: *Here is bread* (Kendrick), *I am the Bread of Life* (Toolan), *Panis angelicus* (Franck), *The Woodcutter's Song* (Vaughan Williams).

The examiner will choose two stanzas, or an excerpt of around 32 bars, to be performed.

Throughout the above tests, the examiner 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, and evidence of a maturity of tone appropriate to the candidate's age and experience.

Section B Musical skills and understanding

1. Sight-reading

Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)

Candidates 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, with 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. & 3. Aural tests & Further questions

Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)

Candidates will be expected to:

- Clap the rhythm pattern of a two-bar phrase played twice. The pulse will first be indicated.
- Sing back as an echo a short phrase, in the candidate's vocal range, which the examiner has played twice. The key chord and the tonic will be sounded, and the pulse indicated, before the excerpt begins.
- Sing, as requested, the middle or lowest 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.
- 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, within the candidate's vocal range.

The examiner will choose one of the prepared items from Section A as a starting point, and will ask questions to ascertain candidates' knowledge of:

- Notes of the treble and bass clefs (including leger lines).
- Time values of notes and rests including tied and dotted notes.
- Time signatures (simple and compound time).
- Key signatures (of major and minor keys, up to five sharps or flats).
- Commonly used Italian terms and musical symbols.

Section C Repertoire

Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)

1. Understanding of prepared anthem

Candidates will be asked two questions on their understanding of their prepared anthem. The topics for discussion will include:

- Text and music (origin, style, meaning, how the music reflects the text)
- Context (historical, musical, liturgical where relevant, other music written in this genre or period)

In addition to the typical questions given at Bronze standard, questions at Silver standard might be:

“Give an example where the music of your piece varies to reflect the meaning of the text.”

“In which musical period did this composer live?”

“Name a piece written around the same time, by a different composer, and say whether it is similar.”

2. Understanding of a contrasted anthem

Candidates should give the examiner a short spoken account of a chosen, contrasted, piece from the **RSCM Silver Collection**, following the outline given in their *Red Voice for Life* book. (They may bring, and refer to, their outline or other notes they have made on the piece). The examiner will then ask one straightforward question about the music or its background.

All singers on the Voice for Life scheme are expected to develop their knowledge and understanding of the repertoire. The **Voice for Life Choir Trainer's Book** (order no: F0100) provides helpful training material for this section of the examination.

Section D

Belonging to the choir

There is no formal examination for this section and no marks are allocated. Nevertheless, it remains a vital part of the Bishop of Southwell & Nottingham's Silver Award. On application, candidates must present a written testimonial from their trainer, counter-signed by the vicar or minister (or head teacher or chaplain or school director of music), confirming their commitment to the choir or singing group.

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 or song, and a psalm or hymn, 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 any suitable piece of music which might be sung (by singing group, choir or congregation) during each season or festival.

3. Ministry

Candidates will be asked to explain, with reference to a different 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 or singing group's contribution to the worshipping life of their church or chapel. *(Candidates should bring two copies of their chosen piece.)*

Candidates are not expected to perform any examples in Section E, but they may refer to their copies of the chosen music. Their understanding of issues raised in this section may vary according to age and experience, and answers may be expressed in straightforward language.

GUIDANCE FOR CANDIDATES AND THEIR TRAINERS AT SILVER STANDARD

SECTION A

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, or use indiscriminately, vibrato.
- Overuse the glottal stop to attack notes.

3. General musicianship: accuracy, expression, sensitivity

Good candidates will:

- Sing notes and rhythms accurately and with secure 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 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.

SECTION B

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 if a mistake is 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 inaccurate in aural tests, with responses faltering, out of tune or rhythmically weak.

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, and their tonality, in the aural tests.

Poor candidates may:

- Demonstrate a poor understanding of notation and theory by making errors when singing their repertoire or 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 or tonality in aural tests.

SECTION C

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 meaningful comparisons with other pieces.

SECTION E

Good candidates will:

- Give thoughtful answers to questions on their role and that of the choir or singing group.
- Demonstrate an acute awareness of the significance of musical ministry within their church or community.
- Be able to give examples of music suitable for specific occasions or seasons.
- Show understanding of a Bible passage chosen in relation to a specific season or festival.
- 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:

- Appear not to have considered their role in the choir or singing group.
- 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 relate music for their chosen season to any suitable Bible text.
- Be unable to answer questions on the Church's year or the format of services.

Contents of the <i>RSCM Bronze Collection</i> order ref D0091	Contents of the <i>RSCM Silver Collection</i> order ref B0111
A Gaelic Blessing Rutter	Angel voices Shephard
A Prayer of St Richard of Chichester White	As water to the thirsty Coleman <i>arr</i> Barnard
And didst thou travel light Shephard	At the river Copland
Ave Maria Lindley	Blessed be the God and Father S. S. Wesley
Ave verum corpus Elgar	Cantate Domino Pitoni
Away with gloom, away with doubt Ferguson	For the gifts of life and love Nardone
Child in the manger Sanger	Fountain of Sweets Aston
Day by day How	Glorious and powerful God Wood
Fairest Lord Jesus How	How beauteous are their feet Stanford
From the rising of the sun Ouseley	I will sing of the Lord's great love McKinley
Glory, love, and praise and honour Eberlin <i>arr</i> Harris	It is a thing most wonderful Moore
Hide not thou thy face Farrant	Jubilate! Ogden
How beautiful upon the mountains Stainer	King of Glory Walford Davies
I am the bread of life Lole	Listen sweet Dove Ives
I give you a new commandment Aston	My Soul, there is a Country Parry
In the heart where love is abiding Plainsong <i>arr</i> Barnard	Now go in peace Mair <i>arr</i> Jeffcoat
Let all the world in every corner sing Halsey	O God, thou art my God Purcell
Listen Nazareth	O Lord, make thy servant Byrd
Love one another S. S. Wesley	O magnum mysterium Archer
Loving God Aston	O salutaris hostia Rossini
May the peace of God the Father Jewish melody <i>arr</i> Harper	O thou the central orb Wood
O for a closer walk with God Stanford	O vos omnes Daley
O mysterium ineffabile Lallouette	Rejoice, the Lord is King Weaver
O Holy Spirit, Lord of grace Tye	Salvator mundi Tallis
Praise, O praise our God and King How	Shepherd of souls Barnard
Sent by the Lord am I Trad <i>arr</i> Weaver	Solus ad victimam Leighton
Steal away Trad <i>arr</i> Weaver	The Beatitudes Watson Henderson
The Easter Song of Praise (Exultet) Shephard	This lovely lady Kelly
The fruits of the land Ogden	Ubi caritas Ives
The Lord's my shepherd Trad <i>arr</i> Archer	Wash me throughly S. S. Wesley
This is the day (Haec dies) Morley <i>arr</i> Greening	
Thou visitest the earth Greene	
Turn thy face from my sins Attwood	
We cannot measure how you heal Scottish trad <i>arr</i> Archer	

Other items in this syllabus obtainable from RSCM Music Direct

tel 0845 021 7726, fax 0845 021 8826, musicdirect@rscm.com, www.rscm.com/shop **include:**

<i>Music for Common Worship 1</i>		order ref RCW101
<i>Here is bread</i> (Kendrick)	<i>Worship in Song</i>	order ref D0062
<i>Panis angelicus</i> (Franck), and <i>The Woodcutter's Song</i> (Vaughan Williams)	<i>Sing Solo Sacred</i> <i>ed Jenkins</i>	order ref B0146 (high), B0291 (low)
Dark Blue Singer's Workbook	<i>RSCM Voice for Life</i>	order ref F0102
Red Singer's Workbook	<i>RSCM Voice for Life</i>	order ref F0103
The English Anthem Collection, vol.2		order ref B0031