

RSCM Dean of Southwell's Bronze Award Syllabus

Examination Conditions

1. There is no age limit on candidates for this award.
2. The examination will take 25 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 £13. Successful candidates will receive their marksheet by post and be presented with their Bronze medallion and green 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 two 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 *Voice for Life* Dark Blue level.
3. 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 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 should be sung unaccompanied.

2. Psalm Singing

Maximum 15 marks (9 to pass)

Candidates should prepare and sing:

either (a) chanted psalmody (melody or their own voice part), to music of their own choice. This should be either 8 consecutive verses and the Gloria, sung to Anglican chant or to a plainsong tone, or the whole of a responsorial psalm.

or (b) the whole of one of the following Psalm Songs, chosen from *Music for Common Worship 1*:

- *O God, you search me and you know me* (Farrell) pp.396-7
- *O Lord, be my help* (Ogden) pp.398-9
- *Sing to God with joy and gladness* (Bell) pp. 400-1.

Marks awarded will take account of the accuracy of the performance, but equal weight will be given to interpretation and musicality.

3. Prepared item

Maximum 20 marks (12 to pass)

Candidates should consult with their trainer and select an item to sing from the **RSCM Bronze Collection** (order ref D0091) which they have already performed or might potentially perform in their own choir or singing group. Other editions are acceptable. They may perform the melody or their own voice part. (If they choose to sing the melody, altos and basses may use a transposed edition to suit their vocal range.)

Marks awarded will take account of the level of difficulty of the music, but more weight will be given to interpretation and musicality.

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 good 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

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 may be allowed if necessary.
- b) To sing at sight and accompanied, a short melody (of about 10 notes), in a key of up to three sharps or flats, to a vowel or solfa (at the candidate's choice). The key chord and first note will be given. A second attempt will be allowed.

2. & 3. Aural tests & Further questions

Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)

Candidates will be expected to:

- a) Clap the rhythm pattern of a 2-bar phrase played twice, the pulse first being indicated.
- 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, and the pulse indicated, 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.

Using the prepared item as a starting point, the examiner will ask questions 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) Time signatures (simple time)
- d) Key signatures (of major keys, up to three sharps and three flats)
- e) Simple Italian musical terms

Section C Repertoire

Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)

Candidates will be asked two questions on their understanding of their prepared item. Answers may be expressed in language appropriate to their age or experience. The topics to be covered will be selected from:

- a) Text and music (origin, style, meaning of words, and how the music, including the accompaniment, reflects the text);
- b) Context (historical, musical, liturgical and seasonal, other music written in this genre or period).

Typical questions on repertoire at Bronze standard would be:

“Describe the mood of this piece, and say generally how the text is reflected in the music.”

“When was the text (*or*, the music) written, and by whom?”

“In what season of the Church's year might this piece suitably be sung?”

“In which part of your Sunday morning service might this piece be sung?”

“Name another piece, or a hymn or song, that your choir might sing at the same season or occasion.”

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 Dean of Southwell's Bronze 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 their choir or singing group.

Section E Choir in context

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 (joyful, sorrowful, praise, thanksgiving, &c.) and why.

2. Liturgy

- a) Candidates will be asked to describe the sung parts of the form of Sunday service (morning or evening, at their choice) with which they are familiar. They may bring, and refer to, a service book or card.
- b) Candidates should choose one major festival of the Church's year (e.g., Christmas, Passiontide, Easter, Pentecost). They will be asked:
 - to show knowledge of the Bible story which the festival celebrates;
 - to name a psalm or hymn which they consider helps to explain the significance of the festival, and to say what makes it appropriate; and
 - to name, and show knowledge of, a suitable anthem or song they might sing for the festival.

(Candidates should bring two copies of their chosen pieces.)

3. Ministry

Candidates will be asked to describe what motivates and inspires them as singers in their choir or singing group. They should show some awareness of their own responsibilities as members in the services they sing.

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 greatly according to age and experience, and answers may be expressed in simple terms and language. Examiners will keep in mind that this is a first award.

GUIDANCE FOR CANDIDATES AND THEIR TRAINERS AT DEAN'S (BRONZE) STANDARD

SECTION A

The performance of each piece will be assessed on the following:

1. *Posture and presentation*

Good candidates will:

- Stand and hold their music well throughout the examination.

Poor candidates may:

- Bury their head in their music and sing into their copy.
- 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.

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.

3. *General musicianship: accuracy, expression, sensitivity*

Good candidates will:

- Sing notes and rhythms accurately and with good 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 sung.
- Be able to convey the mood of the music and reflect the meaning of the text.
- Sing confidently and with great sensitivity.

Poor candidates may:

- Sing frequently out of tune.
- Make a large number of 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 piece.
- Falter and appear to lack confidence.

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 when mistakes are made.
- Show an awareness of dynamics, phrasing and articulation.
- Sound confident and sing with conviction even when wrong.
- Maintain good tone.
- Breathe in appropriate places.
- Be accurate in aural tests, with all sung responses in tune and clapped responses rhythmic and steady.

Poor candidates may:

- Make a large number of rhythmic and pitching errors in sight-reading tests.
- Falter and stumble, disregarding the tempo and rhythm.
- Show little awareness of dynamics, phrasing and articulation.
- Stop when a mistake is made.
- Sing with poor tone and breathe inappropriately.
- Be highly 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

Poor candidates may:

- Demonstrate a poor understanding of notation and theory by making a large number of errors

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.
- Demonstrate their understanding of intervals in the aural tests and be able to identify them when asked.

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 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.

Poor candidates may:

- Be unable to demonstrate their knowledge of the music they sing beyond what is on the page.

SECTION E

Good candidates will:

- Give thoughtful answers to questions on their role and that of the choir or singing group.
- Demonstrate an 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.
- Have some knowledge of the major seasons in the Church's year (e.g., Advent, Eastertide) 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 only a poor awareness of the significance of musical ministry within a church or community.
 - Be unable to make suitable repertoire suggestions for their chosen occasions or seasons.
 - Be unable to answer simple questions on the Church's year or the format of services.
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