

Choral and Organ Scholarships at St Michael's

Introduction

Music plays an integral role in worship at St. Michael's (see typical music lists [here](#)). Along with the Sunday morning eucharist, two choral evensongs a month and special services, the choir typically makes some cathedral visits through the year (for example at Low Sunday and the August Bank Holiday weekend). As well as encouraging singers of all ages and experience to join the choir, we offer several Choral Scholarships, Organ Scholarships and Music Development Grants for musicians wishing to develop their skills and experience in making music.

The purpose of these awards is:

- To support the musical development of scholars, with opportunities to expand their knowledge of repertoire and technique, to consolidate their skills, and to grow in confidence
- To support the development of St Michael's choir in its role of leading and enhancing the worship of the church
- To prepare musicians who may go on to support church music in other parishes and contexts.

Overview

Scholarships are open to anyone learning music at in school or sixth form college (age 9 - 18) as well as students undertaking further or higher education, and adults learning music through lessons or courses. Music Development Grants are available to current members of the choir.

Organ Scholarships

These are of two types:

1. Full Organ Scholars – accomplished organists with the ability to play in full choral services, while undertaking training to develop their skills further.
2. Trainee Organ Scholars – pianists of good keyboards skills, for example equivalent to Grade 5, who are relative beginners on the organ and undertaking tuition to reach the standard needed to lead full services.

Choral Scholarships

Choral Scholars help to enhance and support the choir of St. Michael's, whilst taking advantage of opportunities to expand their knowledge of repertoire and technique, to consolidate their skills, and to grow in confidence. Assistance can be given to those wishing to prepare for university and other choral scholarships. Scholarships offer a chance to gain practical experience, or to develop or improve skills as a choral singer, teacher, conductor, or soloist.

Music Development Grants

These may be applied for by *any* chorister or organist currently in the choir, who has sung or played regularly with the choir, typically for at least 6 months. Specific criteria considered in awarding grants include: attendance and length of time in the choir, evidence of progress in and potential for musical development, other sources of funding, and suitability and cost of the proposed purpose. Grant funds can be used for agreed activities such as music tuition, exam entry, external courses, choir trips, or other expenses incurred in developing relevant musical skills. Music Development Grants are typically made to the value of £50 to £400.

Scholarships

Scholarships are typically made up to the value of £1000 per year, depending on age, experience and activities funded. The award may be used to defray actual expenditure on musical education and activities that enhance musical learning, for example: the cost of tuition, music scores, travel and accommodation for choir trips, residential courses, etc. A proportion of the award will be paid to scholars in consideration of the number of services at which they play the organ, or events where they train others.

Note that in the case of music students in further or higher education, the award may be used to offset tuition fees already paid by the student.

Scholarship Development Plan

A personalised development plan will be created for each scholar in close collaboration with the Director of Music (DoM). This will comprise a range of activities, including for example, tuition, university scholarship preparation (for sixth formers), choral trips or courses, conducting and teaching opportunities, and solos. Opportunities offered may be a combination of input directly from the DoM, from other musicians/singers within the choir or congregation, or from paid professionals external to the church.

The Commitment

Choral and organ scholars are expected to attend all rehearsals, regular and special services during term time, as well as some of the special services (for example, Advent Sunday, Ascension Day, the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols on the Sunday before Christmas, choral services in Holy Week and Easter) some of which fall outside of term. Additionally, scholars should be involved in the wider life and development of the choir, for example through joining choir trips, social events, or supporting younger singers with their musicianship. Up to 4 weeks absence during term time may be permitted by agreement.

Typical Weekly Timetable:

- Wednesday Choir Practice: 7.30 pm to 9.00 pm. Juniors (aged 7-13) rehearse from 6.30 pm.
- Sunday: 9.15 am to 9.45 am Choir Rehearsal followed by 10.00 am to 11.15 am Parish or All Age Eucharist
- 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month: 5.30 pm to 6.15 pm Choir Rehearsal followed by 6.30 pm to 7.15 pm Evensong

Person Specification

Applicants for scholarships should show a good level of musicianship with potential for growth and development. Previous experience of liturgical music is welcomed but not essential. Good self-management and time keeping and a passion for high standards of music-making is vital.

Additionally:

- Choral Scholars should have experience of choral and/or solo singing, and some sight-reading ability.
- Full Organ Scholars should have a good level of playing ability, including accompanying hymns, psalm chants and choral works, improvisation and playing voluntaries. (Advice and training will be available to reach a high level of competence in these areas if some aspects are not fully covered initially. Awards may be made conditional on reaching this standard within a specified period.) They should be able and willing to sing with the choir when not required for organ playing in services or choir practices.

- Trainee Organ Scholars should have good keyboards skills, for example a standard of piano playing at least equivalent to Grade 5. They should be able and willing to sing with the choir when not required for organ playing in services or choir practices.

Application and Audition

Scholarships

Applicants should submit a CV detailing their previous choral/musical experience together with a letter of application by email, addressed to our Director of Music at music@nsab.org.uk, cc'ing the church office at office@nsab.org.uk. We will acknowledge all applications and successful applicants will be invited to a short audition and interview with the Director of Music, who makes the final decision in conjunction with the St Michael's Music (SMM) committee of the PCC.

Music Development Grants

The possibility of grants for any applicable activity may be discussed with the Director of Music at any time. Applications should be made with a letter of application by email, addressed to our Director of Music at music@nsab.org.uk.

Decisions on Music Development Grants are made by the SMM committee, who will acknowledge all applications and notify applicants following the decision.