

VOICE *for* LIFE

One of the RSCM's three core educational programmes, Voice for Life exists to support and promote singing in churches, schools and other communities.

Voice for Life provides a range of training materials, repertoire, courses and training choirs that will enable you to encourage and develop a singing culture in your community; whether a church, school or in the wider community.

Programme Co-Directors: Esther Jones & Leah-Perona-Wright

TRAINING & AWARDS FOR SINGERS

The Voice for Life training scheme

Training a choir is both a challenge and a joy. The Voice for Life training scheme provides a framework for choral singers to develop their vocal skills, musical understanding and knowledge of repertoire. The scheme offers advice on the practicalities of running a choir and comes with a range of teaching material and supporting resources. It is intended to enable choir trainers and teachers to train their choir or group more effectively, and to help singers grow as people as well as musicians. Many singing teachers also find it a useful basis for teaching pupils as individuals or in groups.

Bronze, Silver & Gold Awards

In order to support the choir trainer and affirm the levels achieved within the choir while working on the Voice for Life training scheme, the RSCM provides a parallel system of awards designed to be assessed through a formal examination: these are called the Bronze, Silver & Gold awards. (In some local RSCM Areas the Bronze and Silver Awards are called Dean's and Bishop's Awards.)

Each award has its own syllabus and regulations. These come complete with guidelines to fully prepare the candidate and the choir trainer for the standard expected during the examination.

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REPERTOIRE FOR SINGERS

Song books

It is vitally important, if you want to engage the singers in a choir, to choose the right repertoire. A range of repertoire is being developed in line with the Voice for Life philosophy to give singers the opportunity to:

- Enjoy singing
- Learn to use their voices well
- Experience a range of musical styles
- Sing both accompanied and a cappella
- Develop their musical skills and understanding

Our range of repertoire includes:

Voice for Life Songbook

Voice for Life Festival services

Voice for Life Repertoire for awards

For more information about the songbooks available in the Voice for Life range, go to: www.rscm.com and follow the Voice for Life links.

COURSES & TRAINING CHOIRS FOR SINGERS

Courses

At the RSCM we believe that everyone can benefit from singing, and we offer courses that reflect this. Our courses are open to everyone and are staffed by knowledgeable, enthusiastic and encouraging musicians. No previous experience is required, and no minimum standard is expected – just come along and give it a try! Singing courses are available for young people and for adults.

Training choirs

As part of our work in promoting singing for people of all ages, the RSCM runs a number of training and chamber choirs in the UK:

RSCM Cathedral Singers sing services and other events to a high musical standard in cathedrals, churches and other venues throughout England. There are groups for boys and girls as well as adults.

RSCM Millennium Youth Choir, the RSCM's flagship choir, is a chamber choir, founded in 2000 at the suggestion of the Archbishop of Canterbury. It offers special opportunities to 36 young singers to sing the widest and most exciting range of sacred music to the highest standards.

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THE TRAINING SCHEME IN DETAIL

There are four levels in the *Voice for Life* scheme providing training for beginners through to advanced singers. These four levels are designed for use by singers of any age. A child may start at the first level and gradually work through all four levels. An adult singer would work through exactly the same levels.

Starting at the first level (for beginners) the *Voice for Life* levels are as follows:

1. Light Blue
2. Dark Blue
3. Red
4. Yellow

Each level of the scheme provides training in the following areas:

Module A: Using the voice well

This module aims to teach singers how to develop good vocal technique. It contains many practical exercises and helpful diagrams enabling you to deliver the training with confidence.

Contained in this module: posture, breathing, tone & range, diction, style & interpretation, blending with the choir

Module B: Musical skills & understanding

As a singer makes progress with their voice they need to develop the understanding and skills to support them in their singing. This module develops knowledge of music theory and notation, and then encourages singers to demonstrate this understanding through sight-singing and aural skills.

Contained in this module: music theory, sight-reading, aural skills

Module C: Repertoire

This module aims to develop a good understanding of the musical and historical contexts of the music performed by the choir or individual singer. Singers are encouraged to find out about the background of the music that they sing: to translate and understand the text of a piece, to look at the historical background, to look at the purpose of a piece, to develop an understanding of the style/genre.

Contained in this module: how to find the information, how to write programme notes, programming for your choir – basic principles

Module D: Belonging to the choir

If a singer wants to be part of a choir, there is more required than simply being able to sing. There are issues of commitment, punctuality and responsibility. This module considers how a singer can be encouraged in these areas and gives plenty of additional advice for you on recruiting singers into the choir and how to maintain their interest and commitment.

Contained in this module: recruiting and publicity, new singers, when a singer moves into the adult section, when singers leave the choir, roles for singers within the choir, choir pay, discipline, copyright issues, child protection, weekly standards, general progress, rehearsal tips, starting a choir

Module E: Choir in context

A choir does not exist in isolation. Although it is a community in its own right it is also part of a wider community such as a school, church, village or town. This module encourages singers to explore the wider context of its choir's existence. The material is divided into various sessions, each based on one topic, and these come complete with photocopiable worksheets.

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THE TRAINING SCHEME IN DETAIL

The Choir Trainer's Book

The choir trainer's book is an invaluable resource for choir trainers and teachers to provide the appropriate training for each level of the scheme. It contains all the teaching material and practical advice needed to train and assess your singers with confidence. Its easy to follow layout has been designed to be completely user-friendly. Supplementary resources are available from the RSCM website.

Singer's workbooks

There are four workbooks – one for each level of *Voice for Life*. Each workbook is designed for use by singers of any age and contains interactive questions, exercises and puzzles. The workbooks complement the Choir Trainer's Book, allowing singers to work at their own pace. At the end of each workbook is a space for the choir trainer or teacher to sign and date each target as it is achieved, showing the progress of the singer through that level.

Assessing and progressing

Each level of the *Voice for Life* has graded targets which are assessed informally by the teacher or choir trainer. Once a singer has completed the necessary training for that level, reached the targets and finished their workbook they can be awarded their badge and/or ribbon & medal. The singer then moves onto the next level. To enable choir trainers and teachers to train and assess their singers with confidence, each level of *Voice for Life* comes complete with:

Clear targets which state exactly what a singer should have achieved/be able to demonstrate in order to be awarded their next level.

Ribbons & medals/lapel badges to award singers on completion of each level. These are appropriately coloured to mark the progress of each singer.

BRONZE, SILVER & GOLD AWARDS IN DETAIL

The Voice for Life training scheme and the Bronze, Silver and Gold awards are designed to complement each other. They should be attempted in the following order:

Light blue

Dark blue

Bronze

Red

Silver

Yellow

Gold

In effect, the *Voice for Life* scheme provides training and preparation for the Bronze, Silver & Gold Awards; Light Blue and Dark Blue help a candidate prepare for their Bronze Award, Red level helps a candidate prepare for the Silver award, and Yellow level helps a candidate prepare for the Gold award.

Likewise, the Bronze, Silver and Gold awards affirm each of the *Voice for Life* levels that have been awarded informally by the choir trainer.

What if I have a singer who does not want to take the formal Bronze, Silver and Gold awards?

This is no problem. The Voice for Life training scheme can be used on its own to provide training and motivation to singers within a choir. There is no need to take the Bronze, Silver and Gold awards if your singer is unhappy about undertaking such formal assessments.

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Voice for Life materials are available from:

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