

ORGAN AWARDS

INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATES for 2013 & 2014 entry



Most Oxford colleges elect organ scholars to take charge of, or assist with, the music of the college chapel. The scope of the responsibilities and the nature of the duties vary from college to college, but in most cases require competence as organist, choir trainer and (more modestly perhaps) administrator. In a number of colleges the organ scholar also acts as an organizer of general musical activity. There is a modest fee paid, but in a number of colleges this is supplemented by additional payments for services rendered and by fees for special events. Many colleges also pay for organ tuition.

All organ scholars read for an honours degree, most often, but not necessarily Music, and find that the combination of academic study and practical music makes a sound basis of experience for a later career, not necessarily in music (let alone simply church music).



The colleges may be grouped into several basic categories. First, Christ Church, Magdalen College, and New College maintain choirs of boys and men singing daily services: all three enjoy an international reputation; each is directed by a professional musician, and the organ scholar acts as an assistant tackling a demanding and stimulating repertory at the highest standards. The Queen's College and Merton College have mixed choirs singing a more modest timetable of services than the three choral foundations just mentioned, and are likewise directed by professional Directors of Music assisted by the organ scholars. Worcester College maintains two choirs, one with boy trebles and one mixed, directed by the organ scholars with oversight from the

Chapel Music Consultant. At St Peter's College the Fellow in Music plays a significant role in the work of the choir. The mixed choirs at Keble, Somerville, and University Colleges are overseen by a Director of Chapel Music. In all these cases the organ scholars are active in the direction and administration of the choir. Finally, there is a group of colleges with mixed choirs (singing between one and three services each week) where the organ scholar has charge of chapel music. The opportunities and demands vary in this last group.

In all, twelve colleges have mixed choirs which have the benefit of choral awards for those applying through the September choral-award trials: Exeter, Keble, Merton, Oriel, Pembroke, Queen's, St John's, St Peter's, Somerville, Trinity, University, and Worcester. Concerts – and

in several cases also tours and recordings – form an important part of the activities of a number of the mixed choirs.



The organs vary a good deal in style and size. The choral foundations have fine instruments with mechanical actions: Christ Church (Rieger, 1979), Magdalen (Mander, 1986), and New College (Grant, Degens, and Bradbeer, 1969). At Queen's there is a notable organ by Frobenius (1965), and recently completed instruments include those at Keble (Tickell, 2011), Lincoln (Drake, 2010), and St John's (Aubertin, 2008). St Peter's has a Father Willis organ (1874). Other colleges with organs with modern mechanical action include Exeter (Walker, 1994), Jesus (Drake, 1994), and Pembroke (Létourneau, 1995).

Most colleges offer an organ scholarship bi-annually, so that a third-year organ scholar overlaps with a first-year organ scholar. A few offer a scholarship annually. The 2012 examination for organ scholarships takes place on **19-21 September**. It is possible for a candidate to enter the comparable competition at Cambridge which is scheduled at the same time of year. A candidate taking the examination in the autumn may apply for scholarships available in either the following year or the year following that, or for both years.

For more information you should consult the University's online undergraduate prospectus at www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses/how_to_apply/scholarships/organ.html

The special online application form for organ awards will be available later in the year. It includes detailed instructions on completion, on the choice of colleges, and on the nature of the examination. It should be submitted by **1 September**.

At the audition candidates are required to play an organ piece of their own choice, to play an organ piece at sight, to play from a four-part vocal score (SATB), to transpose a hymn tune (up or down not more than one tone), and to harmonize a melody. Some candidates will be required to conduct a short choir practice with boys or mixed voices as appropriate.

As well as the practical tests candidates in most subjects will be examined academically at the time of the September organ-award trials. (In other subjects the academic assessment of candidates will take place later in the Autumn.) Those applying to read Music will be required to submit examples of recent essays and (if possible) harmony/counterpoint in advance, and will be interviewed. Those applying to read subjects other than Music should consult the admissions advice issued for their subject. All candidates are required to complete a UCAS form.

Formal admission is completed in December. If successful an offer of an Organ Award may be subject to A-level (or equivalent) conditions or other academic requirements; where there is a standard written test for a given subject, an offer of an organ award will usually be conditional upon satisfactory performance in that test. As a rule of thumb a candidate for any organ scholarship ought to have reached a standard roughly equivalent to Grade VIII in organ playing, and in the case of the choral foundations should be beyond this and approaching the standard of a diploma.

The open day for organ and choral awards takes place on **21 April 2012**. You can find out more from this website.

Do consult the organist or music tutor of any college in which you are interested to obtain more detailed information or advice. It is possible for you to visit colleges in the term before the examination.

The Open Days for Music are on **27 and 28 June 2012** - do consult the University's undergraduate prospectus regarding other subjects.

Take advice over the completion of the application form, and take particular care when completing the list of preferences. You are advised to make sure that your school or college is well aware that you are applying for an award **before the end of the Summer term** so that they are able to supply references in good time.

In selecting a piece for performance at the examination bear in mind that your practice time will be limited (half an hour) and that the organ on which you perform may not have more than two manuals.

If you have further questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

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