Exeter Cathedral

Choral Scholarships at Exeter Cathedral

Introduction

The choral scholarships at Exeter Cathedral (two each of counter-tenor or contralto, tenor and bass) are normally held in conjunction with degree courses at Exeter University, (any subject), provided that lecture times do not clash seriously with choir commitments. The Scholarships are normally tenable for three years, though this may be extended for an extra year in certain circumstances. In addition, one year scholarships are available for gap students or postgraduates. The choral scholarships offer experience of singing daily in the Cathedral Choir alongside the six lay vicars. Former choral scholars have gone on to positions at some of the country's major foundations.

Exeter

The city of Exeter lies in the south west of England, and is the administrative capital of the county of Devon. With a population of around 118,000 Exeter is consistently rated as one of the best places to live in the UK. The city centre itself has an impressive new £235 million retail centre with over 60 new shops and restaurants. It is a safe, student-friendly city with a vibrant and fun culture and relaxed atmosphere. The Cathedral is geographically and spiritually at its heart, a fact reflected in the high profile it enjoys in the local media and community. The city has rail services to London (Paddington and Waterloo), Birmingham, Manchester and Bristol, and a busy commuter airport, giving good connections nationwide.

The Cathedral

Exeter Cathedral is one of the nine 'Old Foundation' cathedrals of England and its architecture dates primarily from the Norman period, although the building has been extensively restored, including the extensive reconstruction of the chapel of St James, which was completely destroyed by the Luftwaffe in a bombing raid in 1942. Notable features of the interior include the misericords, the minstrels' gallery, the astronomical clock and the organ. The Diocese of Exeter was formed in 1050 and covers the county of Devon. Both clergy and congregation are fully supportive of the Cathedral's music programme.

The Cathedral Choir

Music has been an important part of the Cathedral's life for hundreds of years. There has been a choir since the thirteenth century and today it maintains a regular schedule of eight choral services a week (during term time). The choir's full complement numbers eighteen boy choristers, eighteen girl choristers, six lay vicars, and six choral scholars.

The Cathedral's music department consists of the Precentor, The Revd Canon Victoria Thurtell, the Director of Music, Timothy Noon, the Assistant Director of Music, Timothy Parsons and an organ scholar. The Director of Music has day-to-day responsibility for the Choral Scholars' training, and any feedback relevant to the Choral Scholars is directed through him.

Basic expectations

The Choral Scholars attend all full Cathedral Choir rehearsals and services (see timetable below), and will normally be expected to sing at each service. This means being in Exeter from around mid-September up to, and including, 26 December, (St Stephen's (Boxing) Day) when there is a choral Eucharist at 10.00 following which there is a holiday of two to three weeks. There is a holiday of a similar length after Easter (beginning after Evensong on Easter Monday) and there is a long half-term of twelve days from the last week of October. There is a half-term of about a week in the Lent Term and a similar one in the Summer Term, with the academic year usually ending before the middle of July. Although the annual pattern of Choir Terms is fairly consistent (taking into account where Easter may fall), Choral Scholars will

be informed of the actual dates well in advance. They will also be expected to take part in choir broadcasts, concerts, recordings, tours, and other events falling outside the regular timetable.
The Choral Scholars will be expected to take their own responsibility for ensuring that all of their notes are learnt in advance of rehearsals. This includes the complete psalms for the day which are not usually rehearsed with the lay vicars. The Director of Music and other members of the music department will assist them in this by arranging separate rehearsals for the Choral Scholars, as required.

The St Peter's Singers

The Choral Scholars will also sing with the St Peter's Singers (The Cathedral's voluntary choir). This choir, normally directed by the Assistant Director of Music, is auditioned, and numbers about thirty men and women, who sing Cathedral services when the Cathedral Choir is off duty or unavailable. The choir also gives concerts throughout the county.

Tuition

The Director of Music has responsibility for mentoring the Choral Scholars' duties at the Cathedral and for feeding back to them detailed comment. Choral Scholars are encouraged to take private singing lessons with a teacher of their choice, and at their own expense. Time off may be arranged to take these, if they are out of Exeter.

Time off/absences

Normally, Saturday will be a complete day off. In weeks where this is not possible, a different day will be arranged. The Choral Scholars, like the other musicians, should normally also have a free Sunday plus six weekdays (except in the event of a choir tour) at half-terms, after Christmas and after Easter, as well as at least six complete weeks off in the summer. This may involve occasional days off in lieu. Absences must be agreed in advance with the Director of Music (or the Assistant Director of Music in the case of the St Peter's Singers). In the event of illness preventing a Choral Scholar attending a practice or service, he/she should first inform the Director of Music.

Dress code and general behaviour

Choral Scholars should be smartly presented at all times, especially when working with the choristers or the general public; this will normally mean wearing black shoes, with a jacket and tie (white shirt on Sundays), or its equivalent for female altos. They must be aware at all times of the importance of discretion in conduct and behaviour, especially with all under-18s, and will be required to have enhanced DBS clearance. Choral scholars should be in sympathy with the Christian ethos.

Weekly timetable

Sunday	Full practice	0915–0950
	Eucharist	1000–1120
	Full practice	1515–1550
	Evensong	1600–1700
Monday-Friday	Full practice	1655–1720
	Evensong	1730–1820
Friday	St Peter's Singers rehearsal 1830–1930	
Saturday	*day off*	

Evensong on Wednesdays is sung by adult voices, and may be followed by a short rehearsal of up to thirty minutes. Choir practices are usually held in the Cathedral. Variations to this timetable and additional events are shown on the printed termly schedule, which is circulated by the Director of Music.

Terms and conditions

The scholarship, payable by the Dean and Chapter, is currently c.£3,500 per annum and paid in monthly instalments in arrears, directly into a bank account. Cathedral accommodation may be available for Choral Scholars at a modest rent. Although not technically employees, Choral Scholars will be given a copy of the employee handbook, which contains details of the Chapter's disciplinary and grievance procedures, as well as general information about the Cathedral.

Applications

Prospective candidates should have a promising voice, a reliable ear and a fluency in sightreading. Audition requirements consist of the following:

a) Prepared singing - two contrasting pieces of the candidate's choice. At least one should be sacred.
b) Sight-singing tests - usually two pieces of repertoire: 16th century polyphony and a modern idiom.
c) Psalm – chanting at sight: Anglican Chant and Plainsong.
d) Ear tests.

Candidates should complete the application form and send it, with a covering letter, to:

The Director of Music, Exeter Cathedral
1 The Cloisters
Exeter
EX1 1HS
Email: timothy.noon@exeter-cathedral.org.uk

On receipt of your application, we will arrange a convenient date for you to visit Exeter for audition and interview as soon as possible. This can be scheduled on the same day as the candidate's University interview (if appropriate). Prospective choral scholars are also welcome to telephone Timothy Noon (01392 430923) for an informal discussion.

These details and other information about Exeter Cathedral music can be found on the Cathedral website www.exeter-cathedral.org.uk

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