

RSCM OXFORD
THE 2012 THREE-DAY COURSE

This year the Course was again held in New College School which has again proved to be an excellent venue, particularly as the Headmaster and Staff have been exceptionally helpful – nothing was been too much trouble. Evensongs were sung in New College Chapel and again everything we requested was done.

I had expected that numbers might be reduced this year and applications were rather slow. However in the event there were 90 including Head Chorister and House Captains, one more than last year.

The Course Director was Kathryn Burningham who has been a Housemistress in previous years. Her selection of music was excellent and singing was to a very high standard. Particular mention must be made of the Mag and Nunc settings which were composed for the occasion by Jonathan White – his third successive compositions for the Course.

Our guest at the final Evensong was Bishop Dr Alan Wilson, Bishop of Buckingham.

Following the three days around 25 choristers sang for the Maundy Service in the Cathedral.

Housemasters were Jonathan White, Gillian Warson, Jonathan Cox and Ben Giddens, all of whom have been housemasters on previous occasions.

Particular thanks are due to Sue Scott and Judith Reading for taking over registration and permission forms, and dealing with individual choristers' problems

Following the Course I circulated an evaluation questionnaire to all 90 choristers and to date have received 34 replies. They were asked for their preferences for the various items which they sang, with results as follows :

		Choices			
		1st	2nd	3rd	Total
1	Morning glory, starlit sky	3	4	5	12
2	Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis	13	12	4	29
3	What wondrous love is this?	6	8	5	19
4	Agnus Dei (Trinity Mass)	0	0	0	0
5	Gloria (Trinity Mass)	0	0	3	3
6	My song is love unknown	3	5	8	16
7	Stabat Mater	8	3	8	19
8	Plainsong préces	0	1	0	1

REPLIES TO QUESTION ABOUT ANY CHANGES:

I enjoyed the singing very much and also earning enough house points for Gibbons House to win
I like it just as it is

I liked the course. I can't think of any changes I would like.

Very good, but I would prefer shorter psalms.

The course was very fun and the pieces were lovely. The Chapel was beautiful though it would have been good if we could have gone to the Cathedral for people who couldn't go to the Thursday Services.

It was very good

I liked the Course very much

I really enjoy it. It's tiring but definitely worth the long drive. It would be nice to be back at Magdalen.

I liked it very much. It was better than last year because I liked the music more.
Good but would like less strict house captains that took more leadership
I enjoyed the course a lot
Very good
Great
Great, loved it. No changes to suggest.
No I love the course as it is
The course was very good and I would not like any changes to it.
I loved it. Maybe bigger house rooms for all of the houses.
I would like them to sell drinks at the tuck sales and try to shorten the day
It was great. I think that it was fine the way it was.
Don't want to see any changes
I really enjoyed it, I cannot think of any changes
The course for me was as excellent as it was, and especially with some friends from school. though I do wish I could see more children from my choir.
No real changes, but I really enjoy singing harder anthems (like the Stabat Mater)
It was good. I would go again next year
Enjoyed the Course and will hopefully come next year; I think the min age should be higher as some smaller children did not behave which let the group down that I was in
I thought the course was good overall.
Very good; maybe people could be less strict about lining up!

GENERAL COMMENTS

I will definitely do this course again next year
I would love to come back again next year.
I liked the tuck shop. Will go again next year!
I think we should have more things to play with in the breaks
I really enjoy the RSCM courses as they are a great experience
Thank you and I was thrilled to be picked to audition for the Bath scholarship, maybe next year!
Sell pencils and rubbers
I learned a lot whilst having fun with my friends. Thanks very much.
Very enjoyable 3/4 days, good to meet other young church singers.
Everyone looked after me

Opinions on the psalms were mixed though most would like them sometimes.

Parents' comments

Our son thoroughly enjoyed the three days and especially the service led by the bishop at Christ Church. Although the days were long his enthusiasm remained constant over the 3 days and he was up early the next day for another 4 hours singing at the Cathedral. He not only loved the music, but also felt happy and safe in a very positive and well structured environment. He was very motivated to earn house points for good behaviour and his house captain reported that he was very focussed throughout. All in all an excellent course, which I would highly recommend.

The boys loved the singing and made lots of friends. Please send me a reminder re next year's course and timings. They loved it and I enjoyed the opportunity to just read my books and switch off from work! Thanks so much for keeping this course going, most appreciated.

The Oxford course was very well structured and organised. The Evensong services were magnificent. The singing power of 80 Choristers was impressive and a brilliant experience for all.

I would like to get the children to do an Evensong - inspired by the music that you introduced the children to.

When our daughter came home each evening she was so pleased how the day had gone and what she had sung. It has been a lovely opportunity for her and thank you and your colleagues for organising such an event. We look forward to other events being planned.

Our daughter found it very strict but good discipline is essential for choristers and so it was good for her to experience it.

Thank you for giving the children this great opportunity.

Our daughter went for the first time last year and was pleased to be going again this year even though we thought at one point that she was going to give up the choir. I attended evensong on the Monday and Wednesday and was astounded at the change in sound; a most enjoyable experience (this is my fourth year of having a child attend the course).

There was an open invitation to Christ Church, instead of Choristers being picked to go, (this made the choristers feel that they achieved something)

It was a fantastic opportunity

Brilliant experience for our daughter to sing with so many other choristers - what a fantastic sound! I really enjoyed the services very much.

This was our daughter's first Easter course and she had a great experience. She learned a lot, it has encouraged her and strengthened her enthusiasm for singing church music and she thoroughly enjoyed it. Thank you for running such an excellent course.

Our daughter now looks forward to this course as a highlight of the Easter period. She loves the house system and the healthy sense of competition which adds to the spirit of the course - as well as the chance to meet so many other enthusiastic young singers. This year she was thrilled to be awarded a scholarship for the summer residential course and is very excited already about August. Thank you for the Easter course - she will certainly be back next year!

Lovely music again this year. Particularly enjoyed the Trinity Mass and What Wondrous Love.

Thanks once again for a wonderful Easter Course.

I thought the course taught our daughter a lot and was very worthwhile. It was upsetting for her when she was told she wasn't on the course due to admin issues so it would be good to improve that.

She came home happy but tired every day and I really liked the evensong. Thanks very much for organising such a great course.

We think that it is a wonderful opportunity for young choristers. We enjoy coming to the evensong at the end of each day. It is also good to see the youngsters competing to be the best behaved. Our children enjoy that and always come home reporting where they stand and how they plan to improve the following day.

Our son seemed to enjoy the course and the fact that he was keen to go to Christchurch afterwards is a good indicator that he was having fun.

A lot of hard work - but once she had got used to the scheme of things she really enjoyed it (where can we get hold of the Mag and Nunc, it would great to introduce it to the our church choir!)

Two ideas: as it is 45 minutes+ each way to Oxford, we tend to stay during daytime. Local parking is limited to 3 hours and longer is quite expensive. If parking for those not from the immediate Oxford area could be secured in the school or via a residents permit, it would make travel costs significantly more friendly. Maybe some tips as where to park cheaply. I would not mind paying for parking if it were less than the Oxford CC charges and went to the RSCM, for example £5 all day to stay in the playground. Secondly, as opposed to other years, the Thursday service was not so well promoted and encouraged. Can I suggest it be considered as part of the course, with an opt-out. This may encourage more children to stay. Also, if a buffet/picnic for parents/choristers were organised in Christchurch (weather permitting) it could be a good bonding event too.

Our daughter said that her captain Gemma was amazing and worked really hard to look after them.

It would have been very helpful to have been allowed to drop our daughter off earlier. I work full time and luckily I have an understanding boss. I did however have no choice in bringing her earlier than the 9.30 start time on the Monday and Tuesday which I felt very guilty about. She did not know anyone on the course and in spite of this she had a great time and came away with a wonderful experience and learnt a lot.

I'm sorry that our daughters haven't done your questionnaire but they have been extremely busy with their return to school + a lot of musical commitments. So I write to you on their behalf. They both very much enjoyed the RSCM course. The highlight of the course for both of them was singing in New College Chapel and they particularly enjoyed the choice of repertoire for the services and also the challenge of singing harmonisations. They weren't quite so keen on the marching drills! Also, they very much wanted to sing at Christ Church on the Thursday morning (where their brothers were both choristers a few years ago, so very nostalgic for us all). But it was obviously going to be a very long service + long waiting time beforehand. Also the girls said that they had very sore feet by that time. So, in the end, we decided not to attend the final service. Perhaps in future it would be better to have a shorter final service as the children are quite tired by then. Anyway, overall it was a very enjoyable experience and a useful step forward in the children's musical education. With best wishes.

Our daughter really enjoyed herself again this year and is still happy to give up 3 days of her holiday each year. I came to Evensong twice this year and thought the singing sounded amazing. It was very impressive that these children had only spent a day singing together. Thank you to everyone involved who gives up their time to make this course possible

No - just thank you very much they had a wonderful time.