

# Organ Scholarships

at St Mary Merton, SW19



The church of St Mary Merton is seeking to appoint a Junior Organ Scholar for the academic year 2022-2023, with the possibility of on-going renewal. Duties will include accompanying the Choir for Sunday services and occasional feast days and assisting at choir practice, along with the opportunity to conduct the Choir from time to time.

St Mary's lies in a quiet and historic corner of south-west London, in the heart of the Merton Park Conservation Area, south of Wimbledon. A church has stood on the site since before the Domesday Book. Founded by the Augustinian Canons who also founded Merton Priory, parts of the present building date back to 1115; the roof of the nave is more than 900 years old and that of the chancel dates from 1400. The two aisles were built to accommodate the Victorian population explosion. Admiral Nelson was a parishioner at St Mary's, where his pew is still in use! The modern congregation is a thriving, busy community of people from all walks of life. There is a Sunday Club, Youth Group, drama society and a wide variety of other parish groups. Both the 9.30am Parish Eucharist and 6.30pm Choral Evensong services are well-attended. The musical tradition at St Mary's is highly valued by members of the congregation and PCC, and the church hosts a number of concerts and events throughout the year.

## The Choir

The Choir sings two services each Sunday (Choral/Sung Eucharist and Choral Evensong), as well as regular cathedral visits (most recently Westminster Abbey, Ely and Southwark Cathedrals), concerts and civic services. As well as a thriving regular congregation, concerts and special services are well attended.



The Choir is made up of mixed ATB adults and teenage choral scholars, and mixed choristers (aged 7-18) - totalling about 35 singers. St Mary's is one of very few parish churches in London with a treble-only top line - the Choristers receive an extensive music education and many go on to university choral scholarships. The Choir sings a wide range of repertoire from Tallis, Byrd and Gibbons to Vaughan Williams, Sumsion and Howells, as well as contemporary composers including Paul Edwards, James MacMillan and Ben Parry. Examples of recent music lists can be found on our website.

The music department is made up of Helen Smee (Director of Music), Ian Tindale (Visiting Organist), and Harriet Burns (vocal coach).

### Weekly Schedule (term time)

#### Fridays

6pm-7.45pm

Probationers and Choristers - rehearsal

8.00pm-9.15pm

Adults and Choral Scholars - rehearsal

#### Sundays

8.45am rehearsal for 9.30am

Sung/Choral Eucharist

5.30pm rehearsal for 6.30pm

Choral Evensong



### The Organ

The organ is a versatile two-manual tracker action instrument with 25 speaking stops, newly-built by Mander in 2015 following a community fundraising project. It is a flexible and much-loved instrument, kept in excellent condition. It is available to the Organ Scholar for private practice at most times throughout the week.

### The Scholarships

The Scholarships are designed for school-age and sixth-form organ students looking to develop their playing and gain experience accompanying and directing a choir. The Senior Scholarship is

particularly geared towards those looking to move on to a university organ scholarship - though it is open to all students over the age of 14. Guidance in liturgical playing, choral conducting and preparation for Oxbridge Organ Trials will be offered to the Scholars where appropriate.

The Scholarship scheme was created in 2014, and following a successful period of four years the PCC has supported the expansion of the scheme to create two Scholarships (a junior and a senior).

### ***Benefits***

- ▶ Access to the organ for private practice throughout the week
- ▶ Free choral conducting lessons, where appropriate
- ▶ Heavily-subsidised instrumental, singing and theory tuition
- ▶ Opportunities to play in cathedrals when the Choir is on tour
- ▶ Guidance and advice for university organ scholarships applications

### ***Junior Organ Scholarship***

- Aimed at young players who would like to gain early experience in basic skills such as hymn-playing and simple accompaniment
- Open to organists aged 12 and over
- Applicants should have good sight-reading skills
- £400 per annum
- Duties:
  - Attend chorister rehearsal each Friday night (in term time)
  - Attend one Sunday service (either morning or evening) each week
  - Support the work of the Music department (e.g. librarian duties)
  - Sing in the Choir when not playing or accompanying

### ***Senior Organ Scholarship***

- Aimed at sixth-formers looking to apply for university organ scholarships and conservatoire organ courses
- Offers opportunities to accompany Choral Evensong, including Anglican chant psalms, canticles and large-scale anthems
- Includes free conducting lessons and the opportunity to direct the Choir
- Opportunity to play for weddings, funerals and baptisms (for the church's standard fee) where appropriate

- Open to organists aged 14 and over
- Applicants should have strong sight-reading skills
- £600 per annum
- Duties:
  - Attend chorister and adult rehearsal each Friday night (in term time)
  - Attend at least one Sunday service each week (usually on a rota basis)
  - Support the training of probationers and junior choristers
  - Support the work of the Music department (e.g. librarian duties)
  - Sing in the Choir when not playing or accompanying

Auditions/interviews will be held in the Summer term 2022. Applications from all interested parties are welcome; the exact nature of the Scholarships can be tailored to individuals' experience and needs.

## How to apply

- ▶ You can apply online at: [stmarysmertonchoir.com/organ-scholarships](http://stmarysmertonchoir.com/organ-scholarships)
- ▶ Or return the application form below
  - ▶ by email to [dom@stmarysmertonchoir.com](mailto:dom@stmarysmertonchoir.com)
  - ▶ by post to: St Mary's Church Office  
15 Church Path  
Merton Park  
London  
SW19 3HJ



## FAQs

Do I need to have had a lot of experience singing and accompanying choirs?

- ▶ No. We're looking for young musicians with an enthusiasm to learn and work as a member of a team. You do not need to have played for a church service before to apply.

I haven't been learning the organ that long. Can I still apply?

- ▶ Yes: our Junior Organ Scholarship is designed to support organists who are not yet that experienced. You will get the most out of an organ scholarship if you already have good sight-reading skills at the piano.

Will I be able to use the organ at St Mary's for practice during the week?

- ▶ Yes, absolutely! This is a major benefit for young players and we recognise that finding suitable practice instruments is a big hurdle to the progression of many young organists. You will need to liaise with the church office so that your practice sessions don't conflict with events in church, but there is a lot of flexibility.

Do I need to be a Christian?

- ▶ No, you don't need to have been baptised or confirmed, or be from a family that goes to church regularly. However, you do need to be supportive of the aims of a Christian community.

I'm not sure if I'm good enough. How can I find out more?

- ▶ Contact Helen, the Director of Music; you can come along and meet our current organ scholar, and find out a bit more about what's on offer. We are looking for potential, enthusiasm and commitment, so if in doubt: please get in touch!

## Application Form

Full name

Date of birth

Home address

Current school, and  
school year from Sep  
2022

Previous school(s)

Full name of parent/  
guardian

Telephone number of  
parent/guardian

Email address of  
parent/guardian

Instruments studied  
and approximate level

Brief details of  
relevant musical  
experience

Any other relevant  
information  
(e.g. special  
educational needs)