

Emmanuel Church ~ Newport, RI

Allen J. Hill, Director of Music

ROYAL SCHOOL of CHURCH MUSIC

Adapted from the RSCM website & the kind help of Priscilla Rigg, St. Luke's Parish, East Greenwich, RI



VOICE *for* LIFE is the RSCM's acclaimed guide to training choirs and singers of all ages. The VOICE *for* LIFE scheme provides a framework for choral singers to develop their vocal skills, their musical understanding, and their knowledge of the repertoire.

The completely revised and up-dated VOICE *for* LIFE is

- A structured guide to vocal training
- Based on graded targets with informal assessment
- Complete with supporting resources to enable teachers and choir trainers to deliver the program with confidence
- Designed for use in schools, churches, and other community choirs
- Easy to use with a clear layout
- Fully compatible with the RSCM Bronze, Silver & Gold Awards

Levels

There are four levels in the VOICE *for* LIFE scheme providing training from beginners to advanced singers. The levels are designed to be used by both children and adults. The levels are:



Each level comes complete with:

- Teaching material in the Choir Trainer's book to enable the teacher or choir trainer to provide the appropriate training for each level;
- Clear targets which state exactly what a singer should have achieved and be able to demonstrate in order to complete each level;
- Singer's workbooks containing questions, exercise, and puzzles. On completion, the workbook is signed and dated by the choir trainer.
- Ribbons and medals/lapel badges to award singers on completion of each level. For school choirs and other non-robed choirs, there are colored lapel badges. For church choirs and other robed choirs, medals can be worn on the appropriately colored ribbon.

Each level is assessed informally by the choir trainer and the badge/ribbon and medal is awarded once the singer has reached the targets and finished the workbook.

Content - Each level of VOICE *for* LIFE provides training in the following areas:

- Using the voice well
- Musical skills and understanding
- Repertoire

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- Belonging to the choir
- Choir in context.

The Training Course

Training a choir is both a challenge and a joy. The Voice for Life training course provides a framework for choral singers to develop their vocal skills, their musical understanding and their knowledge of repertoire. The course comes with a range of teaching material and supporting resources and gives plenty of advice on the practicalities of running a choir. It is intended to enable choir trainers and teachers to train their choir or group more effectively and help singers grow as Christian people, as well as musicians.

Voice for Life involves the choir trainer or teacher, and each member of the choir or group. The course is designed to be flexible so it can fit around your choir's schedule. Much of the training will become part of your usual rehearsal time; for example, the vocal exercises can be incorporated at the beginning of your rehearsal as warm-ups or to break up the rehearsal, and you can provide training on posture, breathing, diction, etc.

The Voice for Life Choir Trainer's Book contains all the information and advice you need to launch Voice for Life with your choir or group of singers. There are also other support materials available to help you motivate, encourage and assess your singers including Singer's Workbooks, medals, badges, song collections, and wall-charts.

How Voice for Life works

There are four levels in the Voice for Life course 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:

- Light Blue
- Dark Blue
- Red
- Yellow

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How singers are trained and assessed

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: Teaching material in the Choir Trainer's book to provide the appropriate training for each level. This includes practical exercises, diagrams, photocopiable worksheets, and sample tests.

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

Singer's workbooks containing questions, exercises and puzzles. There are four workbooks: one for each level of Voice for Life and each workbook is designed for use by singers of any age. 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.

Ribbons & medals/lapel badges to award singers on completion of each level. For school choirs and other non-robed choirs there are colored lapel badges: Light Blue, Dark Blue, Red & Yellow. In addition there is a white lapel badge showing that a singer is new to Voice for Life and has begun working for their first level. For church choirs and other robed choirs there are medals that can be worn on the appropriately colored ribbon.

The skills developed in Voice for Life

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 in this Module with confidence. It begins by helping singers get used to the physical sensations of healthy vocal technique, and in the later levels develops their understanding of the physiology of the voice.

Contained in this module:

Posture, breathing, tone & range, diction, style & interpretation, blending with the choir

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Module B: Musical skills & understanding

Musical skills and musical understanding should grow together; as a singer makes progress with their voice they need to develop the understanding and skills to support them in their singing. Singers need to understand the music they are looking at and develop an ability to read and interpret what they see. Likewise, they need to develop their listening skills. 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 (note values, rests, time signatures, note names, ledger lines, accidentals, double sharps and flats, intervals and degrees of the scale, keys and scales, modes, chords and cadences), sample sight-reading tests, sample aural tests.

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. It also gives singers the opportunity to demonstrate the musical understanding they gain in Module B through some simple musical analysis. 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. Through this research, singers develop the ability to gather information from various sources and to present this in an original form.

Contained in this module:

Finding the information, sample questions, sample answers, how to write program notes, programming for your choir – basic principles.

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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, notes for head choristers/choir captains, 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: Why do they sing in that particular choir? Why does the choir exist? For whom does it sing? How does the choir benefit its members and those outside the choir? The material is divided into various sessions, each based on one topic, and these come complete with photo copiable worksheets.

Contained in this module:

For all choirs: the gift of music, the power of music, what is a community?,

the community of our choir, the wider community, the roots of our choir, the changing repertoire of our choir, special project: serving the wider community.

Additional sessions for church and worship choirs:

Christian ministry and music, regular and special services, festivals and seasons in the Christian year, places of worship (church buildings).

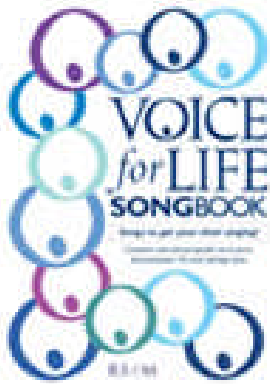
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Voice for Life Songbooks



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

- enjoy using their voices
- learn to use their voices well
- experience a range of musical styles
- sing both accompanied and a cappella
- develop their musical skills and understanding

Voice for Life Festival Services

Every year the Voice for Life team produces a new themed festival service. This is part of the RSCM's outreach to encourage and inspire singers. The services are produced for two purposes:

1. annually, the RSCM invites schools and church choirs to bring boys and girls to sing in our Young Voices Festivals under expert music direction in beautiful venues across the UK and the US. The Kings College RSCM Course, held each year in Wilkes-Barre, PA, is one such program and a committee of interested musician/organists is already at work to develop such a program for Southern New England to be held right here in **Newport** with our very own **Emmanuel Church** as the host venue. Individual items from the Voice for Life festival service books can subsequently be used in a choir's home church or school in special services, concerts or assemblies.
2. To provide the resources for choirs to put on their own special service in their church, school or community. The music is arranged for equal voices and can therefore be used by mixed voice or upper voice choirs. Choirs might use the Festival Service as a fundraising event, or to mark RSCM Music Sunday. One of the most recent services 'Road to Freedom' is particularly pertinent this year, as we celebrate the bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act.

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What is included in a Voice for Life Festival Service?

- all the musical items
 - liturgy and prayers
 - readings (including bible readings, poetry and prose)
 - an order of service to photocopy and hand out to your congregation
 - musical quiz sheets
 - the majority of Festival Services include audio recordings of the pieces, and piano accompaniments that you can sing to in rehearsals if needed
- Voice for Life Young Voices Festivals 200

RSCM Awards

To support the choir trainer and to affirm the VOICE *for* LIFE levels achieved within the choir, the RSCM provides a complementary system of awards designed to be assessed through formal examination: the **Bronze**, **Silver**, and **Gold** awards. These awards affirm the VOICE *for* LIFE levels that have been awarded informally by the choir trainer. Light and Dark Blue levels prepare the chorister for the Bronze award, Red helps the candidate prepare for the Silver award, and Yellow helps the candidate prepare for the Gold award.

- Light Blue
- Dark Blue
- BRONZE AWARD
- Red
- SILVER AWARD
- Yellow
- GOLD AWARD

Examination for the formal awards is entirely at the option of the individual singer. Choristers may work through the VOICE *for* LIFE program and choose not to participate in the formal assessment for the Bronze, Silver, and Gold awards. A chorister must be a member of an RSCM America affiliated choir or an individual member in order to be eligible for the exam.

Each formal award has its own syllabus, complete with guidelines to help prepare the candidate and the choir trainer for the standard expected during the examination. See downloaded files for the entry requirements and more.