

Professor PATRICK RUSSELL

Director of Music, The London Oratory

The Oratory, Brompton Road, London SW7 2RP

e-mail: patrickrussill@blueyonder.co.uk

The Choir of the London Oratory - Vacancy for a Soprano

The Choir of the London Oratory is one of London's leading professional church chamber choirs and the longest-established professional Catholic church choir in the country. Its members sing in all the other major London concert chamber choirs, including the BBC Singers, Monteverdi Choir, Sixteen, Tenebrae, Gabrieli Consort, Marian Consort etc. The Choir has a vacancy for a soprano from October 2022, or as agreed.

The Oratory is London's largest Roman Catholic church after Westminster Cathedral. The primary function of its 14-strong professional choir (4,3,3,4) is to sing at the celebrations of the Latin liturgy for which the Oratory is internationally renowned. Scheduled services comprise (with rates reviewed annually): Sunday Mass (£86) and Vespers (£73) every Sunday of the year plus specified extra services including Mass and First Vespers for all the great feasts of the year, together with other important days such as Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Lengthy services attract enhanced fees (Christmas Midnight and the Easter Vigil are £129 for example). Some feast day Masses and all Vespers require 8 singers only (agreed by rota and mutual convenience). All other services require the full choir. Rehearsals are immediately before the service. In case of unavailability members are required to book their own deputy from the Oratory's approved list. There are approximately 140 scheduled services per year.

In addition, members have first refusal of all extra services, including weddings (£114), funerals (£114), musical oratorios, carol services (enhanced fees apply), plus occasional broadcasts and recordings. They are not obliged to provide deputies for these services. Typical high earners can gross more than £9,000 p.a. from the Oratory Choir's work.

The choir's repertoire covers many areas of music for the Latin liturgy with especial emphasis on Gregorian chant (prior knowledge is not essential), Renaissance polyphony and the Viennese mass repertoire. The choir's stylistic range is therefore very wide, and this is reflected in the choir's current membership which is able to deploy a very wide range of vocal colour as appropriate.

The musical and social environment of the choir is a lively and supportive one. First-rate standards of sight-reading, ensemble singing and stylistic sensitivity are essential. All members must be accomplished solo singers. Members adhere to the highest standards of professionalism in all matters relating to performance, conduct and personal organisation.

The auditions (after short-listing), are planned for the week beginning 18th July (though some may be earlier), and will comprise:

- (1) an own-choice sacred aria in English, Latin or German, plus, if requested,
- (2) the *Agnus Dei* from Mozart's 'Coronation' Mass or (at the applicant's choice) the *Benedictus* from Haydn's 'Missa Sancti Johannis de Deo' (Little Organ Mass) and (3) sight-reading taken from the working repertoire. Applicants will not be asked to sight-read Gregorian chant. Applications (including CV) should be made by e-mail, and must be received by the end of Monday, 27th June.

