

# A musical week in the life of a Chorister

Chris Oates

*In the first in a new series, here is an insight into the amount of hard work the younger choristers have put in by the time they get to the end of evensong!*

**Monday** Just to get the week off to a good start, as soon as I get to school, I drop off my bags and go to St Albans Abbey for 8.30 to practise with the school choir for the service in the morning. In this service there is just one hymn and a sermon.

After school, back at All Saints there is a practice for the senior choristers at quarter to seven. It goes on for an hour, and we practise pieces for the upcoming Sunday and beyond. At the moment we are practising Christmas pieces.

During the practice, some of us will be called out to work on our ribbons. I'm working on the Bishop's Chorister (Purple) ribbon. The ribbon system works like this. When a chorister first joins the choir, they have no ribbon and don't wear a ribbon or a surplice, just a cassock. After about a year, they get a surplice and a light blue ribbon. As they learn more and get better, then they get a dark blue ribbon, which means that they are a senior chorister. After that, they either do the red ribbon, or the Dean's Chorister (Green) ribbon. Next, they do the Bishop's Chorister (Purple) ribbon, and finally the St Nicholas' Chorister (Yellow) ribbon.

It has taken me over four years to get this far. Nobody in the choir has the yellow ribbon at the moment.

**Tuesday** After school I have a trumpet lesson. I am currently working towards my grade 3 Exam, which I am taking in December.

**Wednesday** After lessons end at 4 o'clock at school, I go to a school choir practice at 4:15. It lasts for one hour and fifteen minutes. We practise anthems for the Friday morning service, and any other special services or concerts that we are going to do soon. We are currently working towards the Carol Service in the Abbey.

**Thursday** At lunchtime at school, we have a treble rehearsal for the anthem that we are going to sing on Friday. We are also practising for the Carol Service.

**Friday** In the morning, I drop off my bags and go to the Abbey for a short practice before the service at 8.30. The service has a hymn, a sermon and an anthem in it.

After school, back at All Saints, I go to Solo Club at 6:30 for half an hour, where we practise the solos in anthems. After this William and I teach a probationer about being in the choir. Then, we rejoin the practice from when the adults arrive, and we practise upcoming pieces from quarter to eight till twenty to nine. One of my jobs there is to look after the younger ones in my team.

**Saturday** A day off? Not quite. On Saturday I have a piano lesson with Euan. At the moment I am working towards my grade 4 Exam. Every Saturday Euan also gives me some theory homework for next Saturday. I am currently doing grade 3 theory.

I try to do piano and trumpet practice every day. I usually get time to do it. And in my free time: Err...

**Sunday** At 9:30 in the morning, the choir comes for a full practice before the service. In the service, I have to look after the younger ones, sort out my own music **and** sing. Phew! On an ordinary evening, we arrive back at Church again at 5:30 and practise until the service. Then, in the service there are no probationers, so I don't have any younger choristers in my team.

As Christmas approaches, we have extra rehearsals at 4.00 for the Advent and Christmas Carol services as well.

By 7.45 on Sunday evening my musical week is over. 12 hours rest till I start again!