



Associate Choral Leader (Diocese of Manchester: Choral Scholars) **September 2025 – June 2026**

This training programme offers an exciting opportunity for an emerging choral conductor or vocal leader to contribute to vibrant musical initiatives within the Diocese of Manchester. Alongside this practical experience, the Associate Choral Leader will receive ongoing mentorship and professional development from the renowned music team at St Martin-in-the-Fields in London.

Designed for choral conductors or vocal amateurs with a strong interest in working with student and early-career singers, the training programme is ideal for those in the initial stages of a professional music career. Through hands-on leadership and structured support, the programme aims to nurture and elevate the Associate Choral Leader's skills to a high level.

The training programme will follow an approximate schedule of one and a half days per week, aligned primarily with the Diocese of Manchester Choral Scholar programme. This includes Wednesday evenings and selected Saturdays and Sunday evenings, along with training and professional development sessions on Tuesday afternoons, held approximately six times per term. In addition, there is a monthly Sunday morning commitment at Oldham Parish Church.

This training programme forms part of *Sing My Soul*, a wider initiative focused on developing innovative music and faith-based projects across churches in the Diocese of Manchester.

Diocese of Manchester Choral Scholars

The Associate Choral Leader position is part of a dynamic partnership between the Diocese of Manchester Choral Scholars and the music programme at St Martin-in-the-Fields, generously supported by the Church of England Strategic Development Fund.

This training programme sits at the heart of an exciting initiative designed to support aspiring professional choral singers. Each year, the Choral Scholarship scheme offers up to ten talented singers the chance to engage in a focused period of musical and professional development. Working closely with peers of a similar standard and ambition, scholars contribute to and benefit from a rich tradition of church music in the city centre and beyond.

Recent highlights for the Manchester Choral Scholars have included broadcasts of *Choral Evensong* on BBC Radio 3, appearances in Church of England online services for Christmas and the Platinum Jubilee, and concerts in both Manchester and London - including a high-profile collaboration with renowned vocal ensemble I Fagiolini. They have also participated in workshops with respected choral leaders such as Neil Ferris, Jamie Wright, Jennifer Sterling and Robert Hollingworth.

For the 2025–26 season, the Choral Scholars will be based at St Paul's Church, Withington, in South Manchester, singing Choral Evensong on Wednesdays. They will also take part in performances on selected Saturdays and Sunday evenings at St Stephen Audenshaw, St Hilda's, Oldham Parish Church, and other churches across the Diocese, including occasional concerts at St Martin-in-the-Fields in London.

Associate Choral Leader Training Programme

As part of the training programme, the Associate Choral Leader will take part in a structured programme of professional development, delivered approximately six times per academic term. These sessions bring together Choral Leaders from across the UK, creating a supportive and inspiring learning environment.

Recent workshops have included:

- Conducting technique with Patrick Russill
- Working with children's voices with Laurel Neighbour
- Vocal health with Charlotte Mobbs
- Orchestral conducting with Alice Farnham

The training programme is led by Olivia Tait, Assistant Director of Music at St Martin-in-the-Fields, and follows a hybrid model. Each term includes around three online sessions and three in-person workshops, typically held on Tuesday afternoons.

Aims

To support, develop, and nurture the growth of the choral scholars, while also building the skills required to lead a talented group of young singers across a variety of performances. This includes not only directing services and rehearsals, but also offering guidance, suggesting repertoire, and contributing new ideas or initiatives to the Director of Music. In addition, the training programme aims to foster close working relationships with churches, exploring how music can be used to strengthen their communities and build meaningful connections with the wider local area.

Schedule

The Associate Choral Leader's schedule will follow the Choral Scholarship schedule which revolves around Wednesday evenings and Saturdays. This is as well as the training workshops on Tuesday afternoons.

- Six times a term (three online, three in person) on **Tuesday afternoons** between 2.00 and 5.00pm, you will be based at St Martin-in-the-Fields for development and training.
- On **Wednesday evenings** you will assist in the leading of the Diocese of Manchester choral scholars for services of sung evening prayer and associated rehearsals at St Paul's, Withington.
- On some **Saturdays and Sunday Evenings** you will assist in the leading of the Diocese of Manchester Choral Scholars' Great Sacred Music service and other occasional special services in churches around the Diocese.
- The choral scholars will also have occasional events added into their schedule (e.g. recordings or workshops) which the Associate Choral Leader will be expected to attend, approximately 3-4 times per term. Dates will be agreed in writing prior to the start of term.
- Approximately once a month, on a Sunday morning, direct the Oldham Parish Church choir, working with the clergy to plan the music for this.

Through and since the pandemic, St Martin's and the Diocese of Manchester have established a hybrid model of in-person and online worship. All of the services and events may also be either live-streamed or recorded for future broadcast on our social media channels.

Choral Scholar Term dates 2025-26

Autumn	Wednesday 1st October – Saturday 6 th December 2025 (inclusive)
Spring	Wednesday 21 st January – Saturday 28 th March 2026 (inclusive)
Summer	Wednesday 30 nd April – Saturday 28 th June 2026 (inclusive)

Note: The ACL training programme will begin in September 2025. Sunday mornings in Oldham Parish Church may occasionally fall outside these dates.

Conditions

The Associate Choral Leader commitment is one and a half days per week during term time. Some Tuesday half days (St Martin's workshops), Wednesday evening (St Paul's Withington) and selected Saturday and Sunday afternoons. The Associate Choral Leader (Manchester: Choral Scholars) will receive £6000 for this nine-month long programme, paid in six equal instalments throughout the year.

The costs of travel down to London for the in-person workshops will be covered by St Martin-in-the-Fields.

Throughout this period, you will be an Associate Choral Leader and considered to be a freelancer and not an employee. Nothing in this document is intended to create a relationship of employer and employee between you and St Martin-in-the-Fields or the Diocese of Manchester.

The Choral Leadership will run from September 2025 to June 2026. It will be renewed in exceptional circumstances subject to re-interview. You will work under the supervision of the Director of Music and Assistant Director of Music of St Martin-in-the-Fields.

Eligibility

The scheme is aimed at choral conductors who are in the first stage of a professional career and wish to develop their skills to a high level, particularly in working with choral scholars. In particular, we are looking for:

- Relevant vocal leading experience, and some choral conducting experience
- Ability to work with and develop singers at the early stages of a professional music career
- Enthusiasm for working as a member of a team, together with a willingness to develop their own musical talent
- Experience in administration and organisation
- Desirable: A basic level of keyboard skills is required (e.g. to be able to lead a rehearsal from the keyboard).

Safeguarding

The Associate Choral Leader will work within the Church of England's safeguarding framework. They will need to adhere to the safeguarding requirements of the Diocese of Manchester, including undertaking all training required by the diocese and co-operating with the clergy and safeguarding officers.

Our ambition is to work together to promote a more inclusive environment, which attracts all candidates and signals our commitment to celebrate and promote diversity. We particularly encourage applications from those who are currently underrepresented within choral music.

To apply

Please return the application form, along with a **current CV**, by email to Alicia Hinchliffe, Music Programme Manager at Alicia.hinchliffe@smittf.org by **Wednesday 9th July** at the latest.

Shortlisted applicants will be asked to direct a short choral rehearsal, and undertake an interview. Auditions will take place on **Tuesday 15th July, 3-5pm (London)** or **Monday 21st July, 5-7.30pm (Manchester)**.