



Application Pack

Ref: WA366

Jack and Barbara Bovender Organ Scholarship

**September 2025 – September 2026
(Fixed-term appointment)**

Remuneration of £18,462.60 annual stipend

Closing Date: 3 January 2025

Westminster Abbey



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A letter from the Organist and Master of the Choristers

Westminster Abbey

Thank you for your interest in the Organ Scholarship at Westminster Abbey. This is a unique and special place, in which we will be aiming to provide the successful candidate with an invaluable musical education and experience. Over the past thirty years many of my own former organ scholars, and those of Westminster Abbey, have gone on to successful careers in Cathedral Music as well as in the wider music profession. I am keen to continue that tradition! We want to train and inspire the next generation of leading figures in Cathedral Music.

Many hundreds of people attend the choral services here each day. On bigger occasions the numbers get much higher. Organ-playing naturally makes up a large component of an Organ Scholar's duties, but equally central is the influence that an Organ Scholar has on the sound, morale and expertise of the trebles. Teaching ability, pastoral empathy and interpersonal skills are all important factors in the psychology of choir-training. The way we interact with our singers can and must have a profoundly positive effect. Maintaining a warm, friendly, mutually supportive atmosphere is one of my top priorities.

The high standard of the British Choral Tradition is admired throughout the world. Through the training and opportunities provided at Westminster Abbey we want to do all we can to maximise the chance of this excellence continuing to develop long into the future. I have been privileged to learn from extraordinary teachers and experiences; I have a strong desire to share what I've learnt with the next generation. My organist colleagues Matthew Jorysz and Paul Greally are both exceptional musicians, and there is also a great chance to work with, and learn from, our Lay Vicars and the staff of Westminster Abbey Choir School. I hope that the successful candidate will come to love this place, and its people, as much as I do.

If you would like to have a phone conversation about the scholarship before deciding whether to apply, feel free to get in touch via HRDepartment@westminster-abbey.org.

All best wishes,



Andrew Nethsingha

About Westminster Abbey

Above all else, the Abbey is a church, a place of prayer and praise and holy ground at the heart of the nation. It is also a treasured part of Britain's heritage and a leading venue for tourism. The Abbey has occupied a central place in the celebration of great events for the nation and remains one of the most beautiful architectural masterpieces in Britain.

A living Church, Westminster Abbey is where the coronation of Kings and Queens has taken place since 1066, and where many of the Kings and Queens of England and of the United Kingdom are buried. Principal among them is St Edward the Confessor, King of England from 1042 to 1066, whose shrine is at the heart of the Abbey Church. Beside and around them are buried or commemorated many of the great women and men from almost every century of British history: statesmen and politicians, lawyers, warriors, clerics, writers, musicians and artists.

Neither a cathedral nor a parish church, Westminster Abbey (or the Collegiate Church of St Peter in Westminster, to give it its correct title) is a Royal Peculiar under the jurisdiction of a Dean and Chapter, and with direct accountability to the Sovereign. This relationship with the Sovereign dates back to the origins of the Abbey over a millennium ago, but its current form stems from the Charter granted to the Abbey by Elizabeth I on 21st May 1560.

We are a welcoming community, though also complex and multi-faceted, with around 600 highly committed employees and volunteers. We have deep respect for the heritage of which we are the custodians, whilst we evolve continuously to meet the opportunities of the future. In recent times, this has included the creation of new departments to focus on transforming our digital presence and delivering a significantly expanded programme of public and community engagement. In addition, our newly created Employee Engagement Forum and Social Engagement programme are helping us to support and develop our staff and volunteers. We have also reshaped our governance arrangements, including a Strategic Board, established last year, to help us navigate the challenges and opportunities of the coming decades.

The Dean and Chapter of Westminster defines our Mission in these terms:

- To offer daily divine Worship to Almighty God and resource the Church in this vocation;
- To serve the Sovereign;
- To proclaim the Gospel to the nation and Commonwealth, celebrating the distinctive witness of the Christian faith and engaging with the public square;
- To provide a safe, welcoming and inspiring environment for all who come to the Abbey;
- To care for the precious resources entrusted to us: our people, partnerships, buildings, heritage and money.

Following the State Funeral of Queen Elizabeth II and the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla, which were broadcast to national and international audiences in their millions, interest in the Abbey is very strong. We attract over a million visitors from around the world every year, and our summers and peak period are incredibly busy. However, we receive no regular income from the State, the Church of England or the Crown, and rely almost entirely on income from visitors.

It is an exciting time to join the Abbey, and we look forward to receiving your application and, if successful, welcoming your contribution to the Abbey's history.

Music at Westminster Abbey

Westminster Abbey has one of the few fully professional choral foundations in the world, with a historic musical tradition and an international reputation. At its heart is the Choir of Westminster Abbey. Comprising some thirty boy choristers and twelve professional adult singers (known as Lay Vicars), the Choir plays a central role both in the daily choral services in the Abbey and in the many royal, state and national occasions that take place here.

The Abbey Music Department exists to provide choral and organ music at all services and public events in the Abbey and St Margaret's Church, and to ensure that the music performed in and associated with the Abbey is of the highest standard. The director of music and head of the department is Andrew Nethsingha, Organist and Master of the Choristers. He is responsible, with the assistance of his immediate colleagues, for the musical and vocal training of the choristers (all of whom are educated at the Abbey's unique Choir School) and the department shares with the school responsibility for the recruitment and selection of new choristers. In addition the department is responsible for the Abbey Choir's programme of extra-liturgical activities, including concerts, recordings, and tours, and for the regular series of organ recitals.

The Organist and Master of the Choristers heads a permanent music staff of twenty-seven, comprising the Sub-Organist (Matthew Jorysz), Assistant Organist (Paul Greally – part-time), Organ Scholar, twelve Lay Vicars and two part-time singing teachers, as well as the seven-strong St Margaret's music team led by Director of Music Greg Morris. In addition, the department maintains an extensive register of approved freelance singers who sing as deputies with the Abbey's choirs, and draws on the services of a wide range of external musicians, technicians and specialist consultants. Two full-time members of office staff are responsible for the day-to-day management and administration of the department as well as the planning and delivery of concerts and projects.

A new choir for teenage girls, the St Margaret's Choristers, was established in September 2023. The choir sings during term time at the Sunday evening service in St Margaret's Church, as well as some Wednesday Evensong services in the Abbey.

During term time the organists provide music for ten services per week, of which nine are choral services sung by the Abbey Choir or St Margaret's Choristers, as well as the weekly Sunday organ recitals (a proportion of which are given by guest recitalists) and a variety of special services. From January 2025 the usual schedule is expected to be as follows (always subject to alteration):

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday*	Choral Evensong, 5.00pm
Wednesday	Evening Prayer, 5.00pm <i>or</i> Evensong, 5.00pm (sung by the St Margaret's Choristers)
Major feast days	Choral Eucharist, 5.00pm
Sunday	Choral Matins, 10.00am Choral Eucharist, 11.15am

	Choral Evensong, 3.00pm Organ recital, 5.00pm Eucharist, 6.00pm (Choral Eucharist sung by the St Margaret's Choristers during term time**; said Eucharist with hymns outside of term time)
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*** the Organist of St Margaret's Church usually plays for this service*

Variations in schedule apply at certain times of year, notably in Holy Week and the period leading up to Christmas. Outside term time the same schedule is maintained and the choral services are sung by visiting choirs.

The Abbey has four pipe organs. The grand organ is a fine five-manual Harrison & Harrison instrument, installed for the Coronation of King George VI in 1937 and overhauled and enlarged in the 1980s. A full specification can be found on the Abbey website. In addition there is a two-manual mechanical action Mander organ (The Queen's Organ, 2013) housed in the Henry VII Chapel and a five-stop continuo organ by Kenneth Tickell (1995). The Abbey Song School houses a two-manual practice organ by William Drake (2017).

Job Description

JOB TITLE:	Jack and Barbara Bovender Organ Scholar
DEPARTMENT:	Music
POST REPORTS TO:	Organist and Master of the Choristers
KEY RELATIONSHIPS:	Abbey Organists, Lay Vicars, Minor Canons, Music Department staff, Choir School staff

JOB SUMMARY: A postgraduate organ scholarship is offered from 1st September 2025. The scholarship provides an exciting and unique opportunity for a talented musician to work at Westminster Abbey and acquire extensive experience as a member of the music staff of one of the world's great choral foundations. The element of apprenticeship and training is crucial. The Organ Scholar assists the Organist and Master of the Choristers and his colleagues in all aspects of their work. Under their guidance the Organ Scholar will be encouraged to develop skills in playing choral and non-choral services to the highest standard, in addition to developing and expanding his or her organ repertory. He or she will also assist in training the junior boys and will have opportunities to direct the Lay Vicars in Abbey services. The Organ Scholar is also expected to contribute generally to the day-to-day musical affairs of the Abbey, including St Margaret's Church as required. He or she also acts as assistant choir librarian.

BACKGROUND: Westminster Abbey is both a place of daily worship, and is one of the UK's leading visitor attractions, welcoming over one million visitors each year. A diverse and lively community work at the Abbey, comprising approximately 300 employees and a greater number of volunteers.

MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

These include but are not limited to:

- Playing the organ for a proportion of the choral services in the Abbey and, from time to time, in St Margaret's Church, and generally taking part in the organ-playing rota.
- Playing for Evening Prayer (normally on Wednesday)
- Playing voluntaries before and after services as arranged between the organists.
- Playing for some visiting choirs as arranged during the Abbey Choir's vacations.
- Playing an active role in the training of the choristers with special focus on the junior boys.
- Directing services sung by the Lay Vicars of the Abbey Choir from time to time. The Organ Scholar may also be asked to direct the full choir on occasion, depending on ability and experience.
- Acting as host and guide for visiting recitalists, as required.
- Assisting the other organists (as page-turner and registrant) and attending services (including special services), concerts, and rehearsals, as required.
- Playing not fewer than four of the weekly Sunday afternoon organ recitals during the tenure of the scholarship.
- Assisting generally in the Abbey's musical affairs and administration, such as in the organisation of concerts and special events.
- Adhering at all times to the Abbey's policies, protocols and codes of conduct, with special reference to Safeguarding and Health & Safety matters, and undertaking training as required.

The Organ Scholar also acts as assistant choir librarian, with particular responsibility for the ordering of music as requested by the Organist and/or librarian, preparation of performance materials for the choir, and updating the library catalogue and record of performed repertoire.

Westminster Abbey is committed to the safeguarding of children, young people and adults at risk. To prevent them from harm, we undertake appropriate checks (including the relevant level of criminal record check) on staff and volunteers and require them to complete relevant safeguarding training. This post requires an enhanced level criminal record check.

Person Specification

POST: Organ Scholar

This section outlines the knowledge, skills and abilities the job holder needs in order to fulfil the requirements of the post. 'Essential' criteria are those that the job holder absolutely must have in order to do the job. 'Desirable' criteria are those qualities that would be either useful, or an advantage or those which the job holder can be trained to do.

ATTRIBUTES	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
Education / training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music degree or comparable qualification • Organ study to an advanced level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional organ qualification (eg FRCO)
Knowledge / experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of accompanying choral services to a professional standard, preferably in a collegiate or cathedral choir • Experience of directing singers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of working with and training boys' voices • Knowledge of vocal technique • Familiarity with Sibelius software • Familiarity with desktop publishing software
Skills / aptitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High standard of musicianship and technical proficiency as an organist • Excellent sight-reading skills • Ability to improvise and transpose confidently • Sound knowledge of church music, organ repertoire and the liturgy • Aptitude for team working • Suitability to work with children • Sound administrative skills and familiarity with standard IT programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of continuo playing
Personal attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to the mission and values of Westminster Abbey and a willingness to take an active part in its liturgical and collegiate life • Commitment to ongoing study and professional development, including expansion of repertoire • Calmness under pressure • High standard of personal organisation and presentation 	
Circumstances	The scholarship may be held in conjunction with a postgraduate course of study at one of the London music colleges, subject to the schedule of the course. The scholarship is not normally offered to undergraduates.	

This Job Profile will be kept under review and may be amended by the Dean & Chapter from time to time. Any proposed changes will be discussed with the post holder.

Working for us

Status

The scholarship tenure is for one year from 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026.

Stipend

A stipend of £18,462.60 will be paid, together with additional fees for any special services at which the Organ Scholar plays. This figure includes payment for work in the choir library.

Working Hours

The Organ Scholar's hours of work are broadly determined by the schedule of choral services and rehearsals as set out above. Over the course of the scholarship the average weekly time commitment is expected to be 27 hours, with more hours required during term time and fewer outside of term. The Organ Scholar is normally entitled to at least one day per week free of Abbey commitments, by arrangement with the Organist and Master of the Choristers.

Accommodation

In addition to the stipend, appropriate accommodation or appropriate financial assistance for accommodation may be available. Further information can be provided post-interview.

Annual Holidays

The holiday entitlement for full time staff is 31 days per annum, including the eight recognised public holidays. The holiday entitlement for this post will be calculated accordingly, also taking into account the requirement to work on Sundays and public holidays for much of the year. Holidays must be agreed in advance with the Organist and Master of the Choristers and may normally only be taken during Abbey Choir vacations.

Training

The Organ Scholar is expected to continue their organ studies throughout the period of the scholarship. The schedule of tuition must be agreed with the Organist and Master of the Choristers to avoid conflicting with the scholar's duties. Westminster Abbey will normally be able to assist with the funding of private tuition to a level agreed by the Organist.

Pension Scheme and Life Assurance

All employees can join a Group Personal Pension plan, where the minimum employee contribution is 3% and the maximum employer contribution is 9% (as determined by the level of the employee contribution). You will be auto-enrolled into our qualifying workplace pension scheme after 3 months, if you meet the eligibility criteria. All employees are covered by death-in-service life assurance, whether or not they choose to join the pension scheme.

Staff Discount

All employees receive a 20% discount on purchases from the Westminster Abbey shop and a 30% discount on purchases from the Benugo outlets, which serve refreshments.

Season Ticket Loan

A season ticket loan is offered after satisfactory completion of a probationary period, repayable over 10 months.

Medical Insurance

The Abbey will pay 50% of premiums to join a nominated medical insurance scheme after one year's employment.

Uniform

If a uniform and/or Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is provided, this must be worn at all times.

Equality Statement and How to apply

Equality Statement

The Dean and Chapter aim at all times to recruit the person who is most suited to the job. Recruitment will be solely on the basis of the applicant's abilities and individual merit as measured against the criteria for the job. Qualifications, skills and experience will be assessed at the level that is relevant to the job.

We will ensure that our shortlisting, interviewing and selection procedures avoid discrimination in any way, including on grounds of age, disability, gender, marital status or civil partnership, race, nationality or ethnic origins, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

Please return the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form with your application. This will help us monitor our recruitment practice. The form will not be seen by the people making the selection decision.

Safeguarding

Westminster Abbey is committed to the safeguarding of children, young people and adults at risk. To prevent them from harm, we undertake appropriate checks on staff and volunteers and require them to complete relevant safeguarding training. Offers are subject to a relevant level of criminal record check, receipt of references satisfactory to Westminster Abbey, right to work in the UK, proof of professional qualifications and medical clearance, which may include a medical assessment from the Abbey doctor.

How to Apply

Please complete our application form as CVs **will not** be accepted and ensure that you include all relevant information on the form since information supplied in covering letter or accompanying CV will not be taken into account.

You are also advised to read the Job Description and Person Specification carefully and think about how your experience, skills and abilities help you to meet the requirements listed in the Person Specification. Use the 'Additional Information' section of the form to tell us how you meet each of the requirements.

As well as your previous work experience, tell us about other relevant experience such as community and voluntary experience. Clear information on how you meet all the requirements of the job, with relevant examples, will help us with shortlisting, and we may not be able to shortlist you for interview if you do not provide this.

Please email your completed application to: recruitment@westminster-abbey.org.

Applications should arrive no later than 12 noon on 3 January 2025. Interviews and auditions are scheduled to take place on Monday 13 January 2025.

Applications received after the closing date cannot be considered and we regret that we are unable to provide feedback to applicants who are not shortlisted.

Selection process:

Interviews and auditions (held in St Margaret's Church, Westminster Abbey) will take place on Monday 13 January 2025 Shortlisted candidates will be asked to perform the Prelude in G major BWV 541 by J S Bach and one contrasting work of not more than 6 minutes in length*. They will also be asked to perform a number of keyboard skills tests, as well as to prepare and play a short passage of choral accompaniment.

** NOTE: it is unlikely that candidates will be allocated more than one memory level of general and divisional pistons so this should be taken into account when choosing audition repertoire.*