

2012 AAM Conference – RSCM America President’s Report

Good afternoon, my name is Andrew Walker, Director of Music at St Michael’s in Orlando, and President of RSCM America since January of this year.

Our health is good, with 450 Affiliate members, 96 Individual members, and 24 Friend members, for a total of 570. RSCM America will again this summer offer outstanding opportunities for experiencing choral music at nine week long Summer Courses.

Also...you know what? You've heard this all before...

[...at which point, I tore a page out of my folder, crumpled it into ball, and threw it behind me...]

[the next paragraph began a new page]

Ladies and gentlemen, I think it is high time for a refresher course on what exactly is the Royal School of Church Music, and RSCM America.

If, when you hear the term RSCM, you still think of Evensongs sung in the U.K., at a marvelous stone, gothic cathedral, or a small parish church with an excellent choir, followed by lukewarm tea and cucumber sandwiches with the crusts cut off, mostly enjoyed by the choir boys, the men of the choir, and a few old ladies, you are sadly stuck in the 1960s!

Today's RSCM is an international organization, with branches all over the world, doing things like providing bus tickets for boys in Africa who do not have the funds to get to their choir rehearsals.

Yes, the word “Royal” is in our name, but only because the head office is in the U.K., and the Queen is a patron of the organization. In 2012, the RSCM stands for the following:

1. The highest standards in the performance of choral and instrumental music of all styles, whether offered in praise to God or on the concert stage.
2. The training of all ages to achieve this standard. For vocalists, this primarily happens through the use of the VOICE for LIFE program and materials. It consists of eight levels of achievement, from beginning to advanced, that can be worked on by anyone of any age, with symbols of achievement given at the passing of each level. Passing the last three levels, Bronze, Silver, and Gold, is done with a trained examiner.
3. The opportunity to put this training into practice, either at locally-organized choral festivals, or at our truly excellent Summer Courses, one of which, by the way, will be filmed next summer as part of a documentary film highlighting the work of RSCM America.
4. Reaching out to all denominations, and also to choral organizations in communities and schools.
5. The dissemination of articles and information on a quarterly and monthly basis, focusing on the work of choral directors, choirs, and also including liturgical planning materials.

6. Providing a significant discount for the purchase of books and materials (20-25%) both for items purchased in the U.K. and from locations in the U.S. For example, GIA has over 400 RSCM publications in stock. I just purchased four of the RSCM's new books that venture into the photocopiable realm. These four books included 218 choral items, of which I found, to my ear and taste, 65 eminently usable, and several with a wonderful fresh sound to them.

The grand total with shipping from the U.K. as a member was \$276.55; a non-member would have paid \$80 extra. Were I to purchase 65 separate anthems for St. Michael's (70 copies of each) at an average of \$1.50 a copy, that would amount to \$6,825! Even if you only bought 25 copies per anthem, that would still equal approximately \$2,500! What a deal!

And all this for...wait for it...\$115 a year!

Last week I asked the membership to answer two questions: Why did you join? and Why do you remain a member?

Here are some of the responses I received:

- Fabulous summer courses, and the impact they have on the participants, young and old
- RSCM embodies the best hope of “perfecting the praises offered by God’s people on earth”, of experiencing the “beauty of holiness”, of being committed to Christian and artistic excellence matters in a world full of mediocrity
- The quarterly magazine, *Church Music Quarterly*, and the planning resource *Sunday by Sunday*
- The excellent structured system of teaching quality sacred choral music, liturgical and spiritual concepts, and the language of music, all encapsulated in VOICE for LIFE—and it works!!
- The fantastic RSCM-published anthems
- To stay in contact with like-minded musicians in my area
- I have learned more at RSCM courses about the repertoire and traditions of the Anglican communion than anywhere else

So, please come and visit our exhibit so you can take a look at all the wonderful materials offered by RSCM. You can also fill out a membership form and join us! We were thinking of providing free gin-and-tonics to everybody, but, alas, due to a lack of funds we settled on cookies and M&Ms!

I leave you with a sobering thought. The RSCM was established to promote and train musicians in the Anglican church in the U.K. to aim for and achieve the highest standards in the use of music to praise God. With this in mind, this eminent body of men and women I see before me today represents the “bread and butter” of our “mission field.” Our Board of Directors and so many of our members have a great passion for the goals and standards that this organization strives to achieve. Is that passion to strive for excellence in your ministry and the ministry of your choir alive and well, or is the fire a little dim these days, in need of a jump-start? Becoming a member can help reignite that passion. Because, my friends, the sad fact of the matter is that out of the 7,000 Episcopal churches in the United States, only 342 are Affiliate members of the RSCM. Let’s change that.

Additional Note

Please remember about the quote above—I was speaking to a practically 100% Episcopal crowd! As of August 7, 2012, our total numbers are 583—one away from the highest it has ever been. For the Affiliates, this can be broken down by denomination to:

<i>Episcopal</i>	339
<i>Catholic</i>	30
<i>Presbyterian</i>	23
<i>Methodist</i>	13
<i>Lutheran</i>	12
<i>Anglican</i>	6
<i>Congregational</i>	3
<i>Baptist</i>	1
<i>Disciples of Christ</i>	1
<i>Schools, Choirs & Companies</i>	21

So, if we were to take the total number of churches in the U.S. of all the above denominations, I am sure it would be somewhere between 50 and 100,000. 583 is a minuscule number compared with this. Again, let's change that!