

Ahsan Ali Syed Choral Scholarships - 18/10/2010

Blackburn Cathedral Trust is pleased to announce that it has accepted a £125,000 private donation from Ahsan Ali Syed to provide four new one-year scholarships for female voices* for each of the next five years. The scholarships will provide for one year of training for each beneficiary and will be called the Ahsan Ali Syed scholarships.



The donation will see Mr Ali pay £25,000 per year for five years, the first payment of which has already been received by the Cathedral. This money will pay for four scholarships per year and accommodation facilities for each of the four scholars, which will be provided by the Cathedral.

The scholarships will be for gifted girls, normally aged 18 or 19, who have already trained in junior choirs and now want the opportunity to develop further before continuing their musical careers. The donor has insisted that in the search for beneficiaries of the scholarships, the Cathedral give higher priority to those from more disadvantaged backgrounds where possible.

Now funding has been secured, the Cathedral is launching a search to find the deserving beneficiaries for the Ahsan Ali Syed scholarships.

As well as providing first class training and choral experience, the scholars will be expected to teach and assist with the development of younger singers, including piano and theory lessons as well as singing. The scholars would be expected to play a part in the Young People's Choir, the Cathedral Consort, The Renaissance Singers, The Close Harmony Group and the Girls' Choir, and they would act as ambassadors to the Cathedral and work on its Music Outreach Project at schools around Lancashire.

The tuition that the scholars will receive will be comparable to a foundation year at a Music Conservatoire. International singers, Philippa Hyde and Joshua Ellicott, will provide specialist singing teaching and a programme of workshops and masterclasses will be arranged with a variety of specialist musicians to train scholars in a wide range of vocal style.

Richard Tanner, Director of Music at Blackburn Cathedral says

'I believe that the choral scholar programme at Blackburn Cathedral, given the extensive diversity of choral opportunity and training as well as the fact that scholarships will now be available to females as well as males, is unique among English Cathedrals.'

All 20 of the scholars who will complete the scholarship over the course of the next five years will carry the name of the Scholarship throughout the year.

The Very Reverend Christopher Armstrong, the Dean of Blackburn, said: "We are delighted to receive such a generous donation from Mr Ali. The money will not just benefit the scholars themselves, but a huge number of younger singers and schoolchildren in Lancashire through the duties that the scholars will be expected to perform.

"We are keen to find beneficiaries of these scholarships as soon as possible, so would urge any potential applicants to contact us to discuss their application."

Mrs Gail Stanley MBE. JP. DL, Chairman of Blackburn Cathedral Trust, is pleased that the music department, which is a major beneficiary of the appeal, has received such significant support for their plans to expand the choral scholarship scheme. She went on to commend the Cathedral Appeal office and Rev Canon Andrew Hindley for the part they played in securing the donation from Mr Syed. Mrs Stanley noted that Blackburn Cathedral is leading the way in providing this opportunity for female singers.

Ralph Allwood, Precentor of Eton College and founder/director of the world-famous Eton Choral Courses said "this excellent idea fills a clear gap in the musical opportunities for singers who are leaving school before going to university. It is such an imaginative plan which I am sure will take wings."

Potential scholars are asked to contact Linda Bruce Music Administrator at linda.bruce@blackburncathedral.co.uk.

[Read the Article in Lancashire Telegraph - Monday 18th October 2010](#)

[Read the Article in Lancashire Telegraph - Tuesday 19th October 2010](#)

*The scholarships are primarily intended for females but may be re-allocated to males in later years if the needs of Blackburn Cathedral Choir change in this respect

Blackburn Cathedral Trust is launching an Appeal to raise £3.5m on behalf of Blackburn Cathedral.

The money raised will be used to support the work outlined in Vision and Plans 2010 – 2014 published by The Dean and Chapter in 2009.

The appeal will be launched formally on the 11th December. Over £500k has already been raised.

The appeal is focusing on three main strands of the Cathedral's work, namely the fabric of the building, the music and the community.