



Statement from the Royal School of Church Music

Letter from Lindsay Gray, Director, to the Sunday Telegraph regarding organists' fees for playing at weddings

Sir,

I should like to express the disappointment that I and so many involved in church music must feel on reading the article in the Sunday Telegraph (22nd August) in which church organists are criticised for being overpaid for weddings. Church organists work extremely hard in terms of preparation, preliminary meetings with the wedding couple and their own individual practice even before the actual playing for the service begins.

I also wish to refute the statement in the article that the Royal School of Church Music has backed the call for 'charges (for the filming of weddings) to be dropped'. Whilst there might in the future be a case for a complete all-inclusive fee to cover filming of services, the current position is that remuneration varies from church to church according to the organist's contract, a position we fully support. The RSCM makes recommendations regarding fee levels, but contracts vary widely to reflect the many different types and sizes of church as well as the varying qualifications and skills of organists.

An additional point in the article concerned the question of an organist taking a fee even if a friend of the wedding couple wished to play for the service. Again, it comes down to the organist's individual contract but one would hardly expect a couple to approach the hotel where the reception is taking place and ask for their friend who happens to be an expert chef to replace the regular salaried member of staff!

At the RSCM we delight in seeing couples married in church and we want music to be an important part of the service, but the skills and efforts made by organists and all church musicians must be recognised and valued fully and appropriately.

Yours faithfully

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Mon 23 August 2010

Notes for Editors

The Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) is an international ecumenical charity that educates, supports and enables musicians, composers and clergy in promoting sacred music in churches, schools and the wider community. The RSCM publishes music and training resources (such as its popular *Voice for Life* training scheme for singers of all ages), and organises a wide range of courses, short workshops and activities. With over 8,000 affiliates, members and

friends in over 40 countries it is supported by over 600 volunteers in area committees and a small team of staff based throughout the UK. More at www.rscm.com

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Registered charity no: 312828