

**Mastersingers / Wagner Society of Scotland *Siegfried* Workshop
Edinburgh Society of Musicians, 23rd April 2017**

With not a spare seat in the house the workshop started with the presentation of the 2016 Carole Rees Award for Advanced Musical Studies to Donald Thomson, the sensational young Scottish bass baritone whose voice so impressed Sir John Tomlinson at a recent Mastersingers studio session. The announcement that Jonathan Stoughton is the 2017 Winner of the Carole Rees Award was a secret which had clearly been kept from Jonny himself, who said “It’s a great honour and it came as a total surprise! This will be a huge help to me in preparing for the roles and the opportunities I have coming up at this crucial stage in my career.”



Donald Thomson



Kelvin Lim, Jonathan Stoughton and Donald Thomson

Fresh from her coaching sessions with Dame Anne Evans, Scottish soprano Cara McHardy was on Brünnhilde cover duty and so was able to provide an opening bonus in the form of *Im Treibhaus* from the *Wesendonk* Lieder, that study for *Tristan*

und Isolde which she had performed a couple of weeks earlier at Longborough with Anthony Negus.



Roger Lee Malcolm Rivers' masterclass

Jonathan and Donald sang through the scene in which Fafner and Siegfried exchange insults and which ends in Siegfried dispatching the dragon with his sword. Malcolm Rivers then conducted a masterclass with Donald on the Fafner elements of this scene, Kelvin Lim doing his accompanist's job which included his heroic singing of Siegfried's bits himself, as required.

Jonathan Stoughton closed the first half with "that expression of brute strength", the sword-forging scene in which Siegfried fires up the forge and rebuilds the sword originally forged by his grandfather, Wotan. It is his performance of this piece which had provided one of the most memorable highlights of Saffron Opera's recent production of *Siegfried* in which Donald Thomson had made his debut in the role of Fafner.

Kelvin Lim summoned the audience back from the interval with a characteristically virtuoso rendering of Siegfried's Rhine Journey. They were about to witness soprano Lee Bisset's first public rehearsal of the final Act of *Siegfried*. To add to the excitement of the occasion, she and Jonathan would be meeting for the first time to sing this piece together. As it turned out one would have been convinced that they had been working on it together for weeks, so that the audience lost all sense of "rehearsal" whilst Lee, Jonny and Kelvin meshed wonderfully together to deliver what amounted to a *performance* of the highest order. They carried the intoxication of Siegfried and Brünnhilde's joy to the audience so effectively that everyone present was able to share the exhilaration with which the best performers are able to galvanise and close this piece together.



Jonathan Stoughton and Lee Bisset

We who thus had the pleasure of representing Mastersingers were greatly impressed by the thorough planning and preparation with which the Wagner Society of Scotland collaborated with us on this event. We found ourselves being handsomely looked after by a group of people who clearly knew how to work with visiting artists, and we all gained a great sense of satisfaction from the experience of appearing before an audience which was second to none in its responsiveness.

Roger Lee