



TENSO

The European network for professional chamber choirs

Tenso Young Composers Award 2013 for Eugene Birman

jury report

The Tenso Young Composers Workshop gives participants a chance to work closely with a professional chamber choir, so that they may enhance their knowledge of vocal techniques and the musical possibilities of "the choir as instrument". The second edition of the workshop, which was organized for the first time in 2010, initially chose five composers from more than 60 applicants from all over Europe. During two sessions in Stockholm, the workshop leaders worked with the young composers and heard their scores (short pieces or sketches) performed by Eric Ericsons Kammarkör. After evaluating the material they brought and the way they worked with the choir, three finalists were chosen to participate in the second round in Mechelen in May 2013: Eugene Birman (LV/US), Jamie Man (UK) and Mátyás Wettl (HU), all three born in 1987.

The jury was impressed by the three candidates, who all show immense promise and imagination in their work. On the other hand, they found that all three still have to learn their trade: how to translate their ideas into music – and then into a score – so that a choir can produce the sound that the composers have in mind. A concept is not the same as a written score, and in this sense a (young) composer often stands between his or her idea and the music. To phrase it differently: a composer should not tell singers what to feel, but tell them what to do.

Eugene Birman showed a lot of careful thought in the piece he brought to the sessions in Mechelen, though it was obviously still in the sketch phase and requires more organic, overall unity. The music is highly communicative, and the way Birman uses quartertones is very effective. The jury is curious about the 'point at the horizon' of this young composer, and recommends that he sets his goals openly and firmly.

Jamie Man showed strong, coherent imagination in her music about sleeplessness – a unique idea, elaborated in often convincing musical material. Still, the jury felt that the rather abstract medium of a chamber choir is perhaps not ideal for her compositional talents, and wants to encourage her to develop her skills in a more theatrical direction.

Mátyás Wettl brought immense energy to the workshops, but also a stubbornness that is both his strength and his weakness. His experiments with rhythm will yield interesting results with practice and experience – as long as he puts his energy in learning the tradecraft of writing music as a tool to express his otherwise convincing and attractive ideas.



The jury feels that imposing limitations will be beneficial for young composers and will help them develop their composing skills, together with their conceptual framework. In future, the finalists will be asked to write music on a given texts. Also, the Tenso Young Composers Award 2013 will be a commission to write a piece on a text chosen by Tenso's artistic council.

The jury has great hopes for all three young composers, and hopes to see and hear more of them in the near future. In awarding the prize to Eugene Birman, the jury wants to honour the composer that is expected to write not only the most interesting but also ultimately the most performable music. The new work will be taken on the repertoire by Tenso choirs in the season 2014/2015.

The award consists of

- a commission fee of € 1500 for a new piece for a cappella choir
- additional individual coaching by the workshop leaders
- an invitation to attend the premiere in a European city

Mechelen, 18 May 2013

James Wood
Hans Koolmees
Leo Samama

Tenso Young Composers Workshop - The choir as instrument

first round: Stockholm, 11 and 12 October 2012

final round: Mechelen, 17 and 18 May 2013

workshop leaders: James Wood (UK) and Hans Koolmees (NL)

jury member: Leo Samama (NL)

with the participation of: Eric Ericsons Kammarkör

conductor: Fredrik Malmberg (SE) - Stockholm, Florian Benfer (SE) - Mechelen.

participants final round:

- Eugene Birman 1987 (LV/US – studies in EE/UK)
 - Mátyás Wettl 1987 (HU – studies in NL)
 - Jamie Man 1987 (UK – studies in NL)
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