



# TENSO

*The European network for professional chamber choirs*

## **Tenso Young Composers Award 2016 for Aftab Darvishi**

### **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 fifth edition of the workshop, which was organized for the first time in 2010, initially chose five composers from more than 30 applicants from all over Europe. During two sessions in Mechelen in May 2016, the workshop leaders worked with the young composers and heard their scores (short pieces or sketches) performed by Latvijas Radio Koris. 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 Copenhagen in October 2016: Aftab Darvishi, Piyawat Louilarprasert and Sophie Sparkes.

The workshop that took place during Tenso Days Copenhagen was coached by composer/conductor James Wood, composer Leo Samama, and chamber choir Helsingin kamarikuoro. Tenso would especially like to thank the singers of the choir – not only for producing very good performances of the pieces within limited time, but also for interacting intensively with the composers with questions and well-reasoned comments, which will undoubtedly contribute to their development in vocal writing.

The three composers selected for the second round chose their texts from the period 1914-1918, as part of Tenso's project *14-18 From Poetry to Music*. All three composers chose to work with an English text, two written by soldiers in the trenches, one by a woman who lost her fiancée.

As in previous years, the participating composers could not have been more different with regard to their age, background, and aesthetics. It made, again, for a very interesting workshop, for participants and audience alike.

The music of **Aftab Darvishi** (Iran, 1987) – a lament for the death of a loved one – was ultimately singable. The alto monologue combined with the choral parts created a magic that was felt by everyone present. However, she still needs put in a lot of work on notation and details to make her scores more performable.

**Piyawat Louilarprasert** (Thailand, 1993) was perhaps the most skilled composer at this workshop session. Compared to the score he brought to Mechelen, he came up with an inventive piece full of surprises. Musically, he knows what he is doing; but the relation of the music with the text, which is such an essential part of choral music, was sometimes hard to understand, both for performers and audience.

**Sophie Sparkes** (UK, 1996), the youngest participant, certainly brought the most ambitious score to the workshop. Her harmonic language is interesting; but sometimes it feels like her music is complex without reason. We encourage her to find a way to translate her imagination into music that has purpose and cohesion. We hope she will continue to write choral music; but she should get into the habit of singing the vocal parts herself in order to become more familiar with the possibilities of expression of the human voice..

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The workshop sessions result in commissioning one of the composers to write a new work, to be premiered by one of the members of the Tenso network in the next season. The jury, consisting of coaches James Wood, Leo Samama, external expert Bernhard Hess, and Helsingin kamarikuoro, decided to award the commission to the composer who showed the most understanding of the human voice, and of the relation between text and music.

It is with great pleasure that the commission has been awarded to Aftab Darvishi. With rather simple means, she wrote a convincing piece that is both contemporary and moving. We hope that this award will encourage her to further develop her skills as a composer – helped by the coaching offered by Tenso – and look forward to her new work.

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 by a Tenso choir in a European city