

THE JOINT GABRIELI AND WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF MUSICIANS' SCHOLARSHIP

Over the last 12 months Benjamin Bayl, has been working alongside Paul McCreesh and the Gabrieli Consort & Players as their first Assistant Artistic Director. This scholarship venture, jointly funded by Gabrieli and the Worshipful Company of Musicians, was a project very close to Gabrieli Artistic Director, Paul McCreesh's heart, filling what he saw as a need within the early music movement to nurture and to encourage the next generation of conductors working within the period instrument field. Australian-born Benjamin Bayl has worked widely in the operatic sphere as an assistant and *répétiteur* and his recent work in this field includes assisting Harry Bicket on *Ariodante* at Teatre Liceu in Barcelona, and Richard Hickox on *Giulio Cesare* in Sydney, playing continuo for both productions. As a conductor in his own right, Benjamin founded The Saraband Consort while studying in Cambridge and he continues to develop his work with them in addition to conducting the Orchestra of the City. The

Saraband Consort have recently been selected as finalists in July's York International Early Music Competition.

During the time of the scholarship Benjamin has taken an active role within aspects of programming, performing and conducting. Benjamin has performed as a continuo player with the group on various occasions during the year and he features as harpsichordist on the Gabrieli recording of Monteverdi's *Vespers*. In January 2006 Benjamin was invited to conduct Haydn's Overture to *Il Ritorno di Tobia* in concert at Christ Church Spitalfields – the Gabrieli Consort & Players' London home. And Benjamin has also provided valuable assistance to Paul in taking rehearsals of the singers and the players in preparation for various tours throughout the season. Paul and Benjamin have worked together on programme research including a devised choral programme, *The Road to Paradise*, performed and recorded during the summer of 2006. One of the largest projects of last year for the Gabrielis was

touring and recording Haydn's *Creation* in October 2006. Benjamin was instrumental in drawing up the complicated details of the recording schedule ensuring the efficient use of the limited time in the recording sessions.

Benjamin has been a great addition to the creative team of the Gabrieli Consort & Players bringing knowledge and enthusiasm to the role, as well as providing a sounding board off which Paul has been able to bounce new ideas and repertoire suggestions. The experience has also been a positive addition to Benjamin's ongoing studies: "So far the Gabrieli Consort assistant directorship has provided a number of unique opportunities for me, both in seeing how the Consort is run and also seeing what the job of a conductor such as Paul entails. I have found it particularly useful seeing the behind-the-scenes work that goes into running the Consort. Also, the time that Paul has given in advising me on other scores and projects with my own orchestra and ensembles (not to mention advice on what life is really like as a conductor!) has been very valuable to me." *Senior Warden Leslie East*

SUPPORTING COMPOSERS

In 2004 the Donations and Awards Committee of the Company decided to support the recently established British Composer Awards. Following their successful launch in 2003, the Awards were seen in the music profession and by the media as an important recognition of 'serious' composers and an essential antidote to the slightly dubious ethics of the 'Classical Brits'. It is also seen as complimenting the success of The Royal Philharmonic Society Awards, which, whilst two of their awards go to composers, recognises the contribution of artists and activities across a wider spectrum of serious music.

Discussions with the British Academy of Composers and Songwriters led to the suggestion that a Company award should be attached to one of the categories, which, in 2003, had not attracted as many

nominations as in other categories. With the encouragement of the then Master, John Rubenstein, the award for composition in the Wind or Brass Band category was selected. Commission money of £1,000 would be made available to the award winner. In 2004 that winner was Adam Gorb, Head of Composition at the Royal Northern College of Music. Adam chose to put his £1,000 towards a new work for piano and four winds to compliment Mozart's sublime Quintet for that combination. Jointly commissioned by Luton Music Club and the Company, the work *A Better Place* was premiered in Luton on 23rd October 2006 by Company prize-winners The Zephyr Ensemble, with Simon Lepper, piano. A London première followed a day later in a City Music Society concert at Bishopsgate.

The British Academy was delighted with the Company's support and invited us to contribute again. In 2005, our donation was attached to the Liturgical Composition Award and was said to have helped to boost entries for that category. The winner, Ruth Burchmore, won the award for her piece *A Birthday*, commissioned by the Musicians' Benevolent Fund for its annual St Cecilia's Day service in November 2004. Ruth was then invited to compose a new carol for the Company's annual carol service. She readily agreed and responded

positively to the proposal from Pastmaster Jonathan Rennett that the carol should have an obbligato part for oboe d'amore. Since we share our service with the Turners' Company and the Turners were in the past involved with the turning of woodwind instruments, this idea was embraced and Ruth produced a lovely piece *Quem pastores*, splendidly realised by Jonathan and his superb musicians in St Michael's, Cornhill.

The most recent award, announced at a splendid ceremony in the Hayward Gallery in December, was again for the Wind or Brass category. The winner was Andy Scott for his saxophone concerto *Dark Rain*. Discussions about how Andy might use his commission money are ongoing, one idea being a piece for one of the Maisie Lewis Concerts winners, to première at the Wigmore Hall.

Senior Warden Leslie East

IN MEMORIAM

We record, with regret, the recent deaths of the following liverymen:

Malcolm Wallace
Adam Loxton Peacock
George Gough

OUR APOLOGIES...

In the last edition of *Preserve Harmony* we erroneously congratulated Liveryman Robin Sherlock on becoming Master of the Gardeners' Company. It is, in fact, Liveryman Bill Fraser who is Master Gardener; Robin is Chairman of the Royal Society of St George (City of London Branch). We offer our apologies to both gentlemen.