

► mid-afternoon, I'd put another little asterisk by the name of Joanne Boag, a Scottish soprano who showed a real desire to communicate both verbally, and in a subtle palette of tones and half-tones in her Debussy and Duparc, as well as surviving an accompanist who seemed, in her Mozart *Deh vieni*, entirely ignorant of the aria's idiom or context.

The big red stars, though, went this year to Martene Grimson, Simona Mihai and Elizabeth Watts. The Australian soprano Grimson, just 24, skilfully built momentum through a compelling recitative to Idomeno's *Padre, germani*, with the aria beautifully and intelligently shaped. The "luxe, calme et volupte" of this Duparc *L'invitation au voyage* finally sent the requisite frisson down the spine; and her Debussy *Romance* was willing to take enough imaginative risks to thrill us. She was a clear Maggie Teyte winner, with both the potential for investment, and with a big enough presence to take on the Covent Garden recital which is also part of her prize.

The Romanian soprano Simona Mihai won a Licette Scholarship last year; but we felt she proved herself more than worthy of a share in that fund once again. She sings with a real sense of urgency, hungry for the drama within her aria from *Lucio Silla*, and emotionally wide-awake to the nuances of Duparc's *Chanson triste* and to the sheer élan of Poulenc's *Petit garçon*. She shared the £3000 prize money in equal part with the British soprano Elizabeth Watts. Watts's consonants and vowels really shaped the musical contours of her Handel; her Debussy *Apparition* showed sensitivity to the colours within different areas of her voice; and her Duparc *Chanson triste* knew just what it wanted to say.

Once again, there were all too few accompanists worthy of their singers. John Reid, last year's winner, excelled again. But this year we awarded the Megan Foster Accompanist's Prize for £1000 to Siobhain O'Higgins. She and Grimson will give the prizewinning recital at the Royal Opera House on May 19 – and should go far.

Editors' note:

For information regarding Martene Grimson's recital at the Royal Opera House, please contact the box office there direct.

Readers will note with interest that Elizabeth Watts is also the first winner of the Musicians' Company's Myra Verney Award. Further details about her prize recital will be published in *Preserve Harmony* in due course.

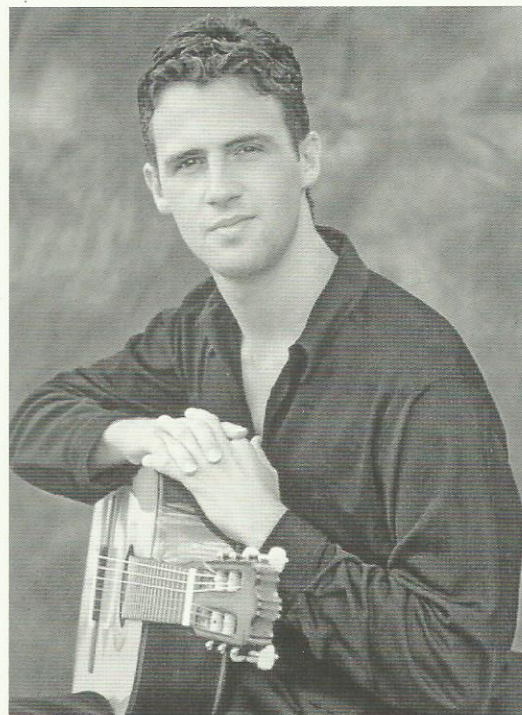
6TH IVOR MAIRANTS GUITAR AWARD

Review by Colin Cooper

Ivor Mairants was a man of many achievements, yet he was continually aware of the needs of young musicians. One of his ambitions was to see classical guitarists as proficient in the language of jazz as they are in classical music, which is why this competition came into being.

The competition has risen in size and stature since its beginnings. This time there were more entries than ever before, and of a higher general standard. Thirteen candidates from five different countries had to play a specified movement from Mairants's *Jazz Sonatas for Solo Guitar*; the choice for 2003 was *Slow Blues and Finale*, from *Evocation for Joe Pass*, an ingenious piece of writing that allows a wide range of interpretation. In what style do you play a blues? You can use Joe Pass himself as a role model, or you can do as one competitor did and give a deeply felt and strongly accented performance that had more than a little of the rawness of Huddie Ledbetter ('Leadbelly') a generation or two earlier.

For their second compulsory work, competitors were offered either the first movement of Lennox Berkeley's *Sonatina* or Paulo Bellinati's *Jongo*, a contemporary Brazilian piece that found itself in the reper-



Carl Herring 2003 winner

toire after a very short time – though only one player chose it. Candidates were also asked to play a post-1900 composition, freely chosen. This led to a wide variation that included Turina, Rodrigo and Walton, and pieces by contemporary guitar composers Leo Brouwer

THE LONDON HARP COMPETITION

A report by Company Freeman Danielle Perrett, a former winner of the competition.

October 12th 2003 saw the latest annual London Harp Competition, the brain-child of liveryman Clive Morley. Clive, as many of you will know, is descended from a line of harp makers who had links with the great company established by Erard (of piano and harp development fame) in the 19th century. The Worshipful Company of Musicians co-sponsors the prizes in this competition, together with Clive. Ever seeking to promote the harp in a contemporary context, this year's competition had a new slant. Clive has been visionary in revising his competition format and harpists (and indeed potential employers of harpists) owe him a great deal for

running this competition. Contestants, this year, as well as playing masterworks from the harp repertoire, were encouraged to perform works that they would realistically be expected to play in very real careers. So many harpists are now employed to play at hotels, restaurants, parties, weddings, in the community etc, where they are required to perform repertoire that displays the beauty and diversity of the instrument, without necessarily

being by the great masters. They may be called upon to produce *Chicago*, *Misty*, *Celine Dion*, *Elvis* songs or even *Daniel Bedingfield* or *Will Young* at the drop of a hat.

The competition attracted an international entry and

