

ONCE HEARD...?

By Liveryman Caroline Loeb

"GIVE US AN ANSWER DO!" This last line of the editorial of the Fifth Issue of Preserve Harmony indeed begs a reply.

From my experience of working in music administration for a number of years, most recently at the Royal College of Music, I believe that the Company could and should do much more for its young Prizewinners. I would like to think that the Court and Livery took a greater responsibility towards helping those honoured by their prizes and medals make successful careers in music. There are very few young musicians who will find it easy to launch their careers successfully, particularly in the current climate, together with ease of world travel and increased international competition and I believe that the Company should take a more active role in helping. It is, after all, the Worshipful Company of **Musicians** rather than a Company unrelated to its Prizewinners!

You ask whether medals and non-competitive prizes are an anachronism; I believe that they are not because they can be used to great credit on a biography/c.v., yet my observation is that, since many are nominated, they do not actually produce an incentive. Many recipients may well not have even heard of the Company until they receive a Medal or prize! It is really Competitions that produce incentive, with prizes consisting of performance opportunities and/or sufficient money to make a difference to a student's empty pocket. In another way, the Maisie Lewis concerts could be more of an incentive although again, many students have never heard of them and do not know how to go about applying for them, though this was certainly improved last year by broader publicity.

In the present economic climate young artists setting out on a career need all the help they can get in obtaining chances both for performing and for being heard. To this end, I feel that the Company should give their Prizewinners more performance opportunities, perhaps through the Livery Club, perhaps through another Purcell Room/Wigmore Hall concert or at venues outside London. Young musicians need to build new audiences who will buy tickets for concerts and take others, rather than simply relying

on their own loyal supporters of family and friends; audiences likewise can be encouraged by being 'entertained' and given the odd glass of wine! One very constructive aspect of Classic FM's late night "Platform Live" slot for young musicians is that it enables young artists to reach audiences completely new to them.

Members of the Company could help directly in other ways too. Before your article appeared I had been speaking to a gifted young composer who had won a Company prize and asked him whether he had ever heard anything from them apart from the initial letter with his cheque. He had not; he seemed surprised that there was no follow up, as have several others I have spoken to. I also asked him whether there was any particular way in which the Company could help him. He replied that he would love to have some advice on the etiquette of approaching ensembles, publishers etc. I know that there are members of the Company who would be able to give such advice but **he** has, as yet, little idea how or whom to approach. Perhaps the Company could issue a List of Members indicating those whose profession is such that they could be approached for guidance. I would like to think so. It could certainly result in better usage of resources. I have had other conversations with prizewinners who would be so pleased if a member of the Court would attend even one of their concerts so that they could meet them and thank them personally; Prizewinners are often more appreciative than might be realised but may be daunted even by the 'aura' of the Company and some of its rather dated language.

How can the situation be further remedied? Apart from the Livery and Court feeling increased responsibility for 'its protégés' and finding a forum for at least some of these Prizewinners to be heard, perhaps members could be encouraged to talk to contacts outside the Company, both in and out of London, in the hope of finding performance occasions, e.g. local festivals, music societies, private or business entertaining. In addition to announcing Prizewinners, I suggest a regular column in this magazine featuring Prizewinners, a number at a time over the year, (at least a paragraph and photograph) so that Members can get to know something about these deserving young artists. It

would be particularly interesting, for Members to know what makes someone worthy of the Constant & Kit Lambert Fellowship, (a substantial award). Could prizewinners perhaps be offered apprenticeships to the Company as a way of making further contacts?

Our world is enhanced through making personal contacts. Prizewinners could be 'hosted' at the Livery Dinner by some lively Members of the Company, not necessarily in the music profession, who might fulfil some of the criteria already mentioned. At least these guests should be taken into drinks and actively introduced to Members of the Company rather than, as I found recently, standing around in a group together, talking to each other and not being looked after (there was even one shy Prizewinner who knew no one, standing in a corner by herself until I spotted her and introduced her to the only Prizewinner I actually knew). Such lack of hospitality, almost negligence, is not a good advertisement for the Company. Prizewinners could be seated, perhaps in pairs, amongst the other guests at Dinner, making contacts, rather than in a group together though is it obviously useful for them to meet each other. From the Prizewinners' point-of-view it does feel as though the Company has little real interest in those who could be its Members of the future.

These are very much personal thoughts and observations which I hope the Court and Livery will take in such a way that the prestige of the Company among musicians and their public may be enhanced. At the very least I hope it will serve as a document for interesting and stimulating discussion.



Caroline Loeb receiving the Freedom.