

## THE MASTERSINGERS WEEKEND REGINALD GOODALL ACADEMY

As stated in our Constitution, one of the aims of the Music Club of London is: "To promote and encourage the cause of Music in particular, and that of the Arts in general." We were recently approached by the Mastersingers Opera Company (with whom we have worked closely in recent years organising the wonderful weekends in Aldeburgh attended by many of our members) and invited to sponsor some Young Artists at the recently launched Reginald Goodall Academy. Your Council were delighted to agree to this request and a contribution was made to assist some of the young artists with Masterclasses held during a special weekend at the home of Sir Sidney Nolan in The Barn at The Rodd, near Presteigne in Powys. One of Australia's greatest artists, Sir Sidney made his home in the outstanding natural beauty of the Welch Marches and established a trust for the purpose of supporting the work and development of creative artists and musicians.

Distinguished contributors to the weekend included Sir John Tooley, formerly General Director of The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Dame Anne Evans and Sir John Tomlinson, two of Britain's most famous and internationally renowned Wagnerian singers, and Neil Howlett, who for 17 years sang leading baritone roles at the English National Opera and is now highly regarded as a vocal coach - all of whom gave their services freely.

Among the young artists being coached were Alwyn Mellor who, according to *Opera Now*, is "set to become one of the Wagnerian sopranos of her generation". Her repertoire includes Santuzza, Ariadne, Chrysothemis, Senta, Venus, and Brunnhilde (Longborough) and she will be understudying Susan Bullock when the Ring is revived at the ROH in 2012. At one stage, Dame Anne commented: "You don't often hear a top C like that!"

Tenor, Andrew Rees (Siegfried at Longborough), sings Alfredo, Pinkerton, Macduff, and recently performed in the Welsh National Opera *Meistersinger* in Cardiff and at the Albert Hall. He has sung at all the major concert halls across London and in the UK.

Magdalen Ashman was coached in the role of Fricka, which she recently sang for the Mastersingers with the London Rehearsal Orchestra. Hers is a huge voice and we can expect to hear much more of her in future. She began her career in the Glyndebourne Festival chorus and has been selected as a soloist in *Die Fledermaus* by Vladimir Jurowski. Carmen followed in France and the UK and she is often heard on the concert platform.

What is fascinating for an audience witnessing one-on-one coaching is the remarkable insight conveyed by artists who have sung these roles for many years – not to mention the dramatic improvements discernible in a very short space of time as a result of their valued input. As pointed out during the weekend, mastering a new role can take many hundreds of hours before one is capable of singing it at the highest level. This is hugely expensive and many Young Artists, sadly, fail to persevere due to the lack of coaching facilities currently available. This is the gap which the Mastersingers endeavours to fulfil and it is hoped that the Music Club will be able to continue such support in the future. We have received a very nice letter from Malcolm Rivers, Founder and Artistic Director of the Mastersingers, expressing gratitude for our support.

As a token of their thanks, we hope to hold an evening with one or more of these Young Artists in London at some time in 2011 – and this may be the first time in many years (if ever) that we have offered a live event to our membership! Watch this space for further details.

**Chairman**