



GARSINGTON OPERA
AT WORMSLEY

FOUR SINGERS PRESENTED WITH AWARDS AT LAST NIGHT OF GARSINGTON OPERA SEASON

Winners of this year's prestigious Leonard Ingrams Awards are soprano **Marlena Devoe** and soprano **Verity Wingate**. These awards honour the memory of Garsington Opera's founder Leonard Ingrams, to ensure the continuity of his vision and support, encourage and nurture the best young artists involved in the creative process of bringing opera to the stage.

Two further smaller awards have been won: the Helen Clarke Award by tenor **Robert Forrest** and the Simon Sandbach Award by mezzo-soprano **Hollie-Anne Bangham**. These awards are made in recognition of their extraordinary talent, musical skill and contribution to the 2018 productions.

All four singers were part of the 2018 Alvarez Young Artists' Programme which provides essential training and performance opportunities with the company. Those selected perform on stage in the chorus and in small roles, and understudy major roles, working alongside eminent and inspiring principal artists with music director Susanna Stranders. This year a full performance of *Die Zauberflöte* was sung by the understudies for a school's audience at Wormsley. Further opportunities are given to participate in masterclasses, training seminars on professional development and public recitals.

Marlena Devoe who understudied and sang the role of Alice Ford *Falstaff* in two performances as well as being in the chorus said: *Being an Alvarez Young Artist has been an invaluable experience. I was given the opportunity to perform the role I was covering – something I never could have achieved without the help and support of the musical staff at Garsington. I will use this award to afford my language and voice lessons so I can continue to develop my voice and explore what it can do.*

Verity Wingate who understudied and sang the role of Pamina *Die Zauberflöte* in one mainstage performance, the school's performance and sang in the chorus said: *Receiving the award has put the cherry on top of one of the best summers of my life. It will help to cover my singing lessons, recordings for the audition season and audition fees.*

Hollie-Anne Bangham who understudied the role of Pilar in *The Skating Rink* and sang in the chorus, said: *The endless skills I have learnt throughout my two years as an Alvarez Young Artist, particularly this year within contemporary opera, will remain with me throughout my career. This generous award will help me afford singing tuition and coaching necessary to continue my progress as an artist, as well as travel costs for auditions throughout the UK and Europe.*

Robert Forrest who understudied the role of Flamand and sung 1st Servant in *Capriccio* as well as singing in the chorus said: *Returning this season as a member of Garsington Opera's Alvarez Young Artists' Programme has been a true pleasure and a very real privilege. As an emerging artist in the fledgling stages of a career in opera the opportunity to be part of such a supportive company and perform with, established inspirational international artists, many of them role models of mine, is an experience that holds exceptional value for me.*

The 2019 season that runs from 29 May to 21 July features four opera productions – Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*, Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*, and the UK stage premiere of Offenbach's *Fantasio*.

23 July 2018

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PRESS RELEASE