

All Star

'She doesn't want to be seen as different...'

Fiercely intelligent Alexia is not only one of Amber's most gifted musicians - she plays the piano, organ and recorder, and sings in three different choirs - but also a talented writer. She has recently finished her novella, 'The Piccolo's Tale', told from the point of view of the piccolo, and is hoping to have it published. Alexia, who enjoys both playing and composing music, is now applying for a place with Aldeburgh Young Musicians for Composition and hopes to read music at Cambridge University.

When asked in a recent interview with the Cambridge News whether she would rather be able to see, 16-year-old Alexia replied, "No I'm perfectly happy how I am."

She believes that she can imagine things in a more beautiful way than if she could actually see them, and describes how she visualises people's voices as colours.

“It is wonderful to watch the expression on her face as she plays and listens - it is one of sheer pleasure and delight”

Ashleigh



Music fills the gap

"Her keyboard lessons give her something to concentrate on and take her mind off all the complications and struggles she has to overcome. They have given her confidence in her ability by showing that, just because she has sight loss, it doesn't mean that she can't do the things she enjoys." Abigail

Blind and partially sighted children often feel isolated socially as they are unable to take part in things that other children are able to do, such as sports and watching television. For them music fills a huge gap and allows them to take part in something normal. It gives them an important focus to their lives, as well as confidence and a feeling of self-worth.

It also helps them to communicate, to relate to other children and to express their emotions. Music makes Amber's children proud as they can be on an equal footing with their sighted peers.

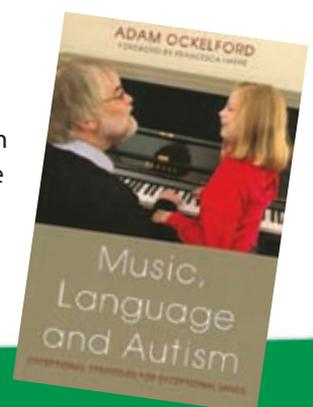


'Music, Language and Autism'

by Adam Ockelford

Many blind children are on the autism spectrum or have what may be called 'autistic traits', and Adam's new book shows just how important music is for all of them, especially in the early years, as a way of communicating and socialising with other people.

This book offers teachers and parents advice and strategies on how to make the most of a child's potential.



Family fortunes

“Leonora’s world opens up when she listens to and plays music.”



Leonora and her mother Rebecca

This is what her mother Rebecca has told Amber. She also says, *“little did we realise how much the Amber Music Award would benefit both our lives in such a fantastic and positive way. Leonora’s life has been transformed and this is due mostly to her piano lessons and their success. For the first time, Leonora has been able to access other tutors and develop a working relationship with someone apart from myself.”*

Rebecca, who home educates Leonora, tells us that being able to play the piano has given 16-year-old Leonora, who is blind and has autistic traits, a musical purpose that has not only brought magic into her life but also that of her mother.

Derek in Spain



Derek Paravicini wowed audiences in Madrid in January, playing requests and improvising a new piece called ‘The Spanish Blues’, based on notes called out to him. He also performed excerpts from ‘El Amor Brujo’ by Manuel de Falla, with a local orchestra.



Derek

Derek and the Spanish musicians had great fun playing together, proving the old adage that music is a universal language. Derek attracted wall-to-wall media coverage, with features in all the major newspapers and television channels.

Tuba time

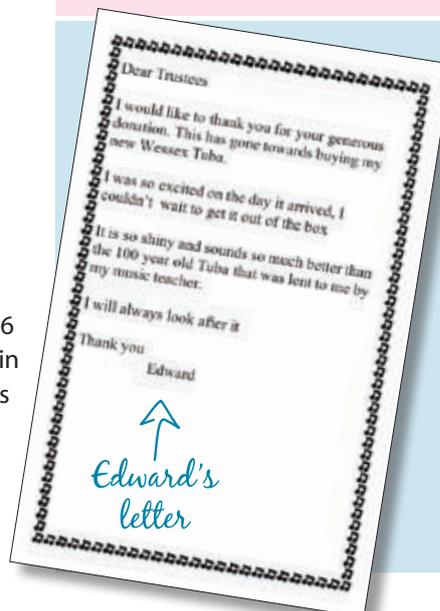
When 7-year-old Edward walked into his first brass lesson, he told his teacher that he wanted to learn to play the tuba.



Edward

His teacher told him that nobody wanted to learn the tuba as it was much too big and suggested he play the cornet instead. This was followed later by an euphonium, which Edward didn’t like at all – it simply wasn’t a tuba! Finally, Edward’s teacher found an old tuba and on his 11th birthday Edward had his first tuba lesson.

Since then Edward has hardly missed a day’s practice, has achieved a merit in his Grade 4, is a keen member of his school orchestra and plays for the Warwickshire Area Orchestra. He recently attended a low brass day at Birmingham Conservatoire where 16 tuba players got together and played in an ensemble. Edward thought this was incredible and the noise they made was “awesome”. And now, with the help of a grant from Amber, Edward is the proud owner of a shiny new brass Wessex tuba.



Edward's letter

Main-stream music

“Music is one of the few activities he can not only participate in on a par with his friends, but also excel at.”

Trumpet-playing Josh has really stepped up to and is enjoying the challenge of working towards his music exams. He has already gained distinctions in both his Grades 3 and 4 and has recently passed Jazz Grade 1!

Music is an escape for 16-year-old Josh as he has very intense days coping with the demands of a busy mainstream secondary school as well as working towards his GCSE exams. He especially looks forward to his weekly trumpet lessons, funded by Amber, and being able to play well gives him a great sense of great achievement and confidence. It has also taught him that practising each day really reaps its rewards.



The final curtain

In October, The John Colet Singers and Orchestra held a concert at St Paul's School in Barnes in aid of Amber, where they sang works by Fauré.



Helped by Adam Ockelford's moving talk about Amber's crucial work, the orchestra raised £1,625 - the most it had ever raised! It was a very special evening for the choir as it was their final concert after nearly 25 years.

A real Tweet

Amber understands the power of social media and its ability to connect, educate and motivate people.

Our Facebook and Twitter pages are up and running, so please make sure you and your friends “follow” and “like” us. By doing this, you can keep up with all of Amber's news and events, and also

help to raise awareness of our charity. We hope that these sites will soon become a portal through which the children and parents we support can share their musical stories.



www.youtube.com/user/theambertrust

Tune in to YouTube and see the brilliant video clips about Amber. These not only give a real insight into the work we do and the impact our funding has on the children we support, but also show how and why music is so important to blind and partially sighted children.

Ray Charles effect

A recent study featured in the Financial Times reveals that people who are missing one sense sometimes seem to develop extra sensitivity in others.



In what has been called the 'Ray Charles effect', blindness, for example, may lead to more acute hearing. Some neuroscientists think that this only occurs in young brains that are malleable enough to rewire the circuits that process sensory information – a possible link to blind children being more likely to be musical.

High-achieving Hannah

“Music is her companion. It has helped her to become a confident young lady. She loves playing the piano. Another Music Award will help her to realise her dream.”

The Amber Trust is delighted that Hannah, whom we have supported with piano lessons since 2007, has achieved an amazing A*, A and B in her ‘A Levels’, and will be studying Government and Politics at the University of London from September 2014.



Hope springs

In March, Miller Philanthropy put on an inspirational evening at Cadogan Hall in support of The Amber Trust and three other small dynamic charities that work with disabled young people.



As well as our own unique Derek Paravicini, several other talented acts performed including the remarkable ‘Choir with No Name’, made up of homeless people. They certainly proved that singing and music makes people feel good.

Hilton’s helping hand

Together with his musical friends, Derek Paravicini took part in an exclusive event hosted by the London Hilton on Park Lane.

The performers included the incredible 5-year-old pianist Alex Pylypenko and classical singers, Hannah Davey, Russell Painter and Daniel Roddick. Along with the fantastic new talent of classical jazz violinist, Ben Holder, they provided a magical evening’s entertainment, followed by a delicious dinner. There was also an auction and a raffle that raised a significant amount for The Amber Trust.

A big thank you to Hilton Worldwide for their generosity and support.



Collecting for Amber



The new collection boxes have arrived and Poppy McGee and her mother Angie, who raised £1,000 for Amber last year, are hard at work distributing them for us.

Anyone who would like to help raise money for Amber, please email us and we will send you some collection boxes.

Our new logo



With design help and sponsorship from Miller Philanthropy, Amber has a brand new logo and letterheads, as well as this Newsletter. Thank you Gina for supporting us once again.

Miller
PHILANTHROPY

The therapy of music

...from a teacher's point of view

Shiroma has been a music therapist for the past 20 years.

Since 2008 she has worked at Ash Field Academy in Leicester, a day and residential school for pupils with special educational needs and physical disabilities.

Five of her pupils, supported by Amber, are blind, wheelchair-bound and have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Two are brothers and both have Batten's disease, a life-limiting illness, but Shiroma cannot emphasise enough how much music has meant to their difficult lives over the years.

She says of all her pupils that music appears to "open them up and breathe energy into them". It clearly makes them happy and is a powerful communicator through which they can express their



often impenetrable emotions. Shiroma has built strong relationships with these children, not through words but music.

...from a mother's point of view

Tuneful twins - one of their greatest loves is music.



Holly and Katie

When they were just a few weeks old, five-year-old twins Holly and Katie both suffered a serious brain infection that caused swelling of the brain, or encephalitis, resulting in significant sight loss.

Although the years since then have been an adventure of ups and downs, their music therapy sessions have given them great joy and comfort.

Their mother Amanda says, "as music is about self-expression there are no rights or wrongs, and can be very calming to two little girls who often find life overwhelming.

They can play with sound, dance about and feel the vibrations even though they cannot clearly see the instruments that are being played.

The twins explore through touch and participate through hearing and joining in, using their other senses.

Music is a great equaliser, where everyone can join in at their own level.

We would not have had the means to fund this ourselves and Holly and Katie have loved every minute of their sessions."

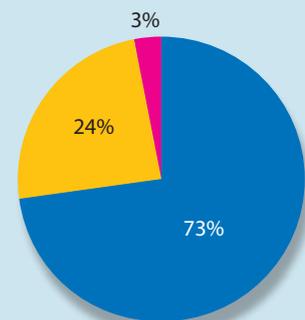
More and more music

Over the past 12 months Amber has given 134 further Music Awards – an increase of 41, or 44%, over the same period last year.

We also received 59 applications from children Amber has not supported before.

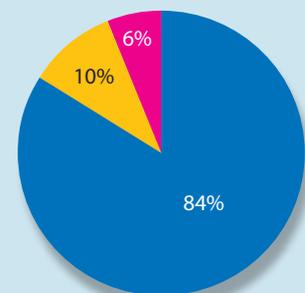
The number of Music Therapy Awards has increased by 14%, probably due to cuts in government funding. As one therapist told us, music therapy is often wrongly considered as entertainment and therefore is the first thing to be dropped.

Music Awards given in 2013/14:



- Music lessons
- Music therapy sessions
- Grants towards musical instruments

Music Awards given in 2012/13:



- Music lessons
- Music therapy sessions
- Grants towards musical instruments

Thank you to Roderic

Roderic Hill's calm and efficient leadership has transformed Amber from a small organisation whose main focus was on setting up a music centre for blind and disabled adults, to a charity that is recognized nationally in the field of visual impairment.



Roderic, Adam and Gavin

Roderic, who took over from Gavin Tait in 2003, has helped to raise hundreds of thousands of pounds and supported over 430 children, many for several years. He has also ensured that Amber promoted much-needed research into the impact of blindness and partial sight on the musical development and abilities in children.

He leaves a rich and secure legacy on which our new Chair, Julia Walport, can build.

Amber's new Chair

We are delighted to welcome Julia Walport to Amber.

She brings to the charity her knowledge and expertise both in medicine and music.

For a number of years, Julia was responsible for the day-to-day running of the Ealing Youth Orchestra in which her four children have played. Professionally, as Dr Julia Neild, she trained as a chest physician and spent most of her career with the Medical Defence Union.

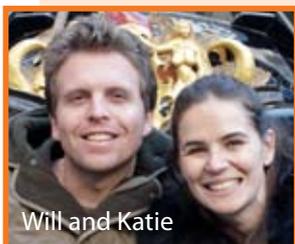
A keen amateur singer, Julia hopes to encourage choirs and orchestras throughout the UK to support Amber's important work.



Julia Walport

Amber helps to tie the knot!

Will and Katie, both Amber trustees, are getting married.



Will and Katie



Chloe and Luke

They first met at Durham University and recently went to Venice to celebrate their engagement.

Congratulations also to Chloe Hill, Roderic's daughter, and Luke, who met at Amber's 'Boogie Under the Bridge' s' party. They are tying the knot in May.

Vital to Ben

Ben's deep love of music is very apparent.

In fact he learns best through music. It improves his speech and language, his posture and his listening skills. Music gives Ben, who has no eyes and needs support in all he does, the skills that are vital to his independence now and in the future.



Ben

Save the date

On November 23rd, Amber will host 'An afternoon with Derek Paravicini and Friends' at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket.

This is a not-be-missed event, so put it in your diaries and tell your friends. More details and tickets will be available soon.

To find out more about any of the children we have featured in this Newsletter, please look at the 'Children's Stories' on our website www.ambertrust.org