



**The Amber Trust**  
Music for Blind Children

The Amber Trust brings music and fulfilment into the lives of blind and partially sighted children - a lifeline in a confusing world

# AmberNotes 2016

## Clarence House Reception

To celebrate the 21st birthday of The Amber Trust, in January 2016 our President, HRH The Duchess of Cornwall, hosted a very special event at Clarence House

Musical savant and Patron to The Amber Trust, Derek Paravicini, gave a recital to an invited audience in the magnificent St James's Palace State Apartments. Despite being blind and having severe learning difficulties, Derek is an internationally renowned jazz pianist.

He was the inspiration behind the establishment of The Amber Trust, which his family helped to found and continue to support today. Derek entertained guests with his own unique piano arrangements of well-known classics and songs from the musicals. As ever, he took requests from the audience, which included his signature tune, Rimsky Korsakov's Flight of the Bumblebee - complete with a boogie-woogie bass.



HRH The Duchess of Cornwall with Julia Walport and Derek Paravicini

## Wathen Hall Concert

*A celebration of Amber beneficiaries and supporters*



On Sunday 8 May 2016, we hosted 'An Afternoon of Music' with special performances from the Derek Paravicini Quartet, a number of the talented individuals we support and Poppy, one of Amber's biggest supporters. The event, which was attended by over 200 people, was the first time that beneficiaries and supporters of The Amber Trust have taken to the stage with professional musicians. Do check out the [short video](#) Amber has produced from the concert.

As well as individual performances, the musicians had the opportunity to jam together on stage, which was truly wonderful and inspiring for everyone present. Derek Paravicini also took special requests from the audience, which included theme tunes from The Pink Panther, Harry Potter and Skyfall.

Sarah Garrett, a supporter of Amber who attended the event with her family said:

*"It was a privilege to attend The Amber Trust's 'Afternoon of Music'. Derek Paravicini wowed us again with his extraordinary virtuosity but this time with his brilliant jazz quartet. It was also truly inspiring to see performances by some of the talented children, who are challenged in various ways, whom Amber supports. And wow, were they impressive! Mahalia Creft, Anna Foo and Ashleigh Turley have clearly had their lives enhanced by their exposure to music, but more than that, they performed with such musicality and genuine love for music. While joyous and energetic, it was a terribly moving concert, made more so by the fabulous performance by Poppy McGhee. The concert was so uplifting for all, demonstrating The Amber Trust's real commitment to improving the lives of children through music."*

# Ashleigh



Ashleigh is a truly remarkable girl. She was born at 23 weeks and six days and spent her first six months in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. As a result, Ashleigh developed Retinopathy of Prematurity

(RoP), which left her without any sight at all. Her general development was also delayed, and Ashleigh, now aged 13, attends a school for children with special needs. However, she is a young pianist with truly outstanding potential.

She has a wonderful musical ear, which enables her to play on the keyboard virtually anything that she hears and is very quick to learn new pieces.

For the last year, Ashleigh has had piano tuition with Amber Trustee, Professor Adam Ockelford at the University of Roehampton. Adam specialises in working with blind children who have exceptional musical abilities and needs. Best of all, as Ashleigh's playing has developed, she has blossomed as a young woman: her language and social skills have come on apace, and in the last 12 months she has entertained MPs and their guests at The House of Commons, featured on Radio 3's In Tune programme with Sean Rafferty, recorded a segment for The One Show and performed in the Cadogan Hall at a charity event generously organised by The True and Fair Foundation.

# Kai



Kai is four. He is partially sighted and can only focus on objects that are very close to him. He has other more complex neurological problems with the developmental age of a one year old. But since Kai was a baby he has enjoyed music and loves playing musical instruments.

Even though he is unable to walk or talk, he is able to interact with music, for example, by clapping along to sounds that he enjoys, by moving his shoulders and by tapping his feet to the beat of the music, when he is dancing.

His mother says: *"Music is such an important part of Kai's life. Despite being severely disabled and not able to walk or talk, music brings so much joy and happiness to him. Since attending music classes funded by The Amber Trust Kai now has the ability to follow and understand music; he can play instruments in time to the music, as well as anticipate different elements of songs. The passion, energy and enthusiasm of Kai's teacher at Musical Fun Time means the classes are really helping his listening skills, co-ordination, motor skills, confidence and self-expression and we would like thank The Amber Trust for their fantastic support in providing this for Kai's musical development."*

# Daniel



Daniel has a rare eye condition called septo-optic dysplasia and has been blind from birth. He has perfect pitch and has been fascinated by music since he was two, playing and

composing on a range of keyboards he has been given. He finds it hard to make friends, and usually spends his holidays in his room making music on his keyboard.

Daniel had used a simple Yamaha Tyros 1 keyboard for some years. He hopes to go to college and continue with music when he leaves school this summer so Amber and FNAIST co-funded the purchase of a Tyros 6 keyboard for Daniel. This may be key to developing his skills and giving him the capacity to create more complex music whilst at college, which could lead to employment in the music industry in the future.

Speaking about his new keyboard Daniel said: *"It is everything I wished for in a keyboard, and I am learning more about it all the time. I feel very happy now because it will give me the chance to play even better and learn all about different types of sounds."*

# Linden Lodge



During the spring term 2016, Amber arranged for musicians from Live Music Now to give weekly evening music workshops to a group of resident teenagers with profound and multiple learning difficulties in addition to visual impairment at Linden Lodge, a specialist day and weekly boarding school. These evening musical activities were particularly valuable to the teenagers in providing enjoyment and a way of socialising with others. Fifteen students took part each week and sessions were led by a range of jazz, folk and classical musicians. For many of the students, music is a vital lifeline providing a unique form of self expression and communication. The music sessions were interactive,

providing hands-on experience, broadening their horizons and enriching their lives. Amber is very grateful to Wednesday's Child for providing the funding to enable us to arrange these workshops and to North Bridge House School whose energetic and successful fundraising activities were behind this. Their very generous support also enabled us to organise a week of music workshops just before Easter 2015 for nearly 70 students, further music workshops during the summer term and 2 concerts during Linden Lodge's summer school. We were delighted that children from North Bridge House School were able to visit Linden Lodge to take part in a morning of music during one of the workshops.

## The Batten Disease Project



Blindness often occurs with other disabilities, and among the most challenging cases that Amber supports are children who have life-limiting conditions, such as the forms of infantile and juvenile dementia known as Batten Disease, who are supported by the Batten Disease Family Association, or 'BDFA'.

For many years, parents, teachers and therapists have remarked anecdotally how important music seems to be to these children - particularly as their disease progresses to its inevitable end. Recent research at the European

level suggests that this is common to many children with Batten's: sometimes, music appears to be the only avenue of self-expression and communication that remains. So, with the generous support of the Baily Thomas Charitable Foundation, the University of Roehampton and the Chiltern Music Therapy Trust are initiating a new research project that will follow 12 children over three years, to try a range of different musical interventions and to see which are most effective in enhancing the children's quality of life. The Amber Trust is supporting the project by providing grants throughout the project for all the children taking part to have music sessions, provided by therapists and teachers. The new strategies and resources that are developed will be made freely available online to families and the professionals who work with them.

## All Join In 2!

In 1996, The Amber Trust worked in partnership with the RNIB to produce a set of musical materials for the teachers, therapists and parents of visually impaired children and young people with learning difficulties.



All Join In! as the materials were called, proved a great success, and were distributed to all special schools catering for children with learning difficulties across the UK (where most blind and partially sighted children who have additional needs are educated). You can still hear the songs being sung in schools and centres today, as new generations of teachers and children use them.

But, after 20 years, there is a need to bring the materials up to date, and to develop new resources based on our current understanding of how blind and partially sighted children with learning difficulties develop musically. So a new project was set up towards the end of the financial year, again in partnership with the University of Roehampton and Chiltern Music Therapy, to visit current schools and other centres, and bring together fresh musical ideas which will be recorded and made freely available to parents and practitioners in 2017.

*This work is most generously supported by the MariaMarina Foundation.*



# Fundraising

## Poppy is fundraising for Amber again!

Last summer Poppy was sponsored to learn grade 1 'cello in a term. She also took part in our fundraising concert in May 2016 and she and her mother Angie are holding concerts to support Amber in Wookey, Somerset on 12 November 2016 and 25 February 2017. Congratulations to Poppy who played in the Musikverein in Vienna in September 2016 as a winner of the Vienna Grand Prize Virtuoso and for gaining Distinction in her Recorder

Diploma. Do watch the video of her on Amber's website describing the impact of first hearing Derek Paravicini play and why she has fundraised for Amber ever since.



## Busking for Amber



In June 2015, Lilian Hall and the Cambridge Suzuki Group took part in the Cambridge Busking Festival. Despite almost constant drizzle, a dozen young musicians valiantly played under

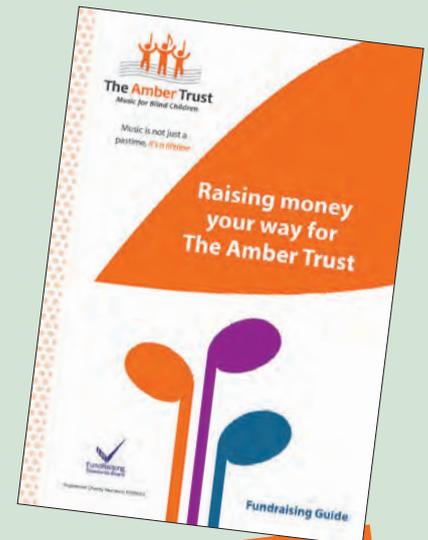
umbrellas in Cambridge City Centre for almost an hour raising money for The Amber Trust. They attracted quite a lot of interest, in particular because, when not playing his violin, the 8 year old blind violinist Theo was explaining to passers-by about learning the violin without being able to see. The group played again in September in the Cherry Hinton Festival on a bright, sunny day and raised more valuable funds for Amber.

# Trustee and other news

- Many congratulations to Fi Costa who has been awarded a PhD by the University of Roehampton for her research that found that music could have a positive effect on pain, depression and anxiety in some older people.
- After more than a decade as an enthusiastic champion of Amber, firstly as a member of our fundraising committee and more recently as a Trustee and Company Secretary, Lucy Kenyon retired from the board in September 2015. Amber is indebted to Lucy for the huge contribution she made.
- We are delighted to welcome Tracy Tait as a Trustee. Tracy is well known to Amber's friends and beneficiaries having been the face of Amber, administering Amber's Music Awards since 2012. She brings more than 15 years experience of fundraising in the charity sector where she is currently Head of Individual Giving at the national cancer support charity Penny Brohn UK.
- We also welcome Elissa Turay, who has experience of working with the visually impaired at the RNIB, who joined us in April 2016 to administer the Music Awards.
- Congratulations to Rachel Starritt who has had a very successful year at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and featured on the piano in the Channel 4 Paralympic trailer.

## Could you organise an event to raise money for Amber?

Our fundraising guide provides all the information and support you need to raise funds for Amber. The pack also includes plenty of fundraising ideas, so there will be no excuse for not doing something to help our important charity!



Without support from people like you, we couldn't provide the services we do. From the many children and young people whose life is being positively changed by music – thank you.



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Registered Charity No: 1050503 • Company No: 3117803

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