

# Basil's News



## Hello and Welcome

to the 2015 edition of Basil's News, the newsletter of the Philip Bates Trust. This year we have once again seen an unprecedented number of applications for funding and we've been able to support some really worthwhile causes - see page 8 for more. For news and information throughout the year please visit us online.

### New Website

We're very excited to announce that an entirely new website has just been launched for the trust, bringing us up to date with the modern internet and making it much easier for us to add information on news and events. The site also has an entirely new design and layout which we hope you'll find easier to navigate and more attractive than the old one.

There is still some work to do, but we hope to have everything completed over the course of the summer. If you have any comments or suggestions please drop us an email at [admin@philipbatestrust.co.uk](mailto:admin@philipbatestrust.co.uk)

Please note that from now on, the website can be accessed at both [philipbatestrust.org.uk](http://philipbatestrust.org.uk) and [philipbatestrust.co.uk](http://philipbatestrust.co.uk)



# A Touch of Basil 2014

This 15th annual concert in memory of Philip was held on 27 September 2014 and as usual was a brilliant mix of different styles of music presented by performers ranging from the age of 3 to 83! It is hard to pick out individuals from such a talented group of musicians but there were several highlights for me.

First young Georgina Bloomfield playing Aaron Copland's 'Hoe-Down' on her violin moved many of us to tears. She played with such confidence and accuracy making us, the audience, part of her performance. Also the four Ex Cathedra Junior Academies were flawless in their performances.

This is where the very young children stole our hearts with their 'What is the Weather Today?'. Their singing, actions and expressive faces showed how much they were enjoying themselves. The Combined Choirs' rendition of 'Stand by Me' was a treat in itself.

Another highlight was Sarah Brienza playing two contrasting pieces on her clarinet, making the playing of the instrument seem effortless. Sarah should have played in 2013 but an accident between dress rehearsal and performance prevented this. However, it was worth the year's wait!

The soprano voices of the two winners of the Ashleyan Opera Prize 2014, Carrie-Ann Williams and Jessica Wise, were heard with clarity in the wonderful acoustics of the Adrian Boulton Hall (let's hope its replacement will be as good!) The songs they chose as soloists showed off the depth and beauty of



*Ex Cathedra Junior Academies*

their voices but their duet together was the piece de resistance.

The Tom Walker Trio provided a contrast in style as they performed music that they had composed themselves with guitar, vocals and drums, setting the hall ringing with the beat of the drums.

Vocalist Krystina Murtagh and soprano Lucy Licence, winner of the Philip Bates Performance Prize at Bishop Vesey's, both performed with confidence and style in front of a very appreciative audience. Many congratulations to all participants. I look forward to the 2015 concert! *Janet James*



# Composition Prize 2014



*Composition Prize Winners and Adjudicators 2014*

On 14th November 2014 Tony and I enjoyed an evening of varied music when we attended the Philip Bates Prize for Composers and Songwriters at Birmingham Conservatoire.

The first piece was “Me faytz tro-bar” by William Cole. Unfortunately, because the date for the event was set quite late by the Conservatoire, the performers, The Hermes Experiment, already had a prior engagement so a high quality video recording was used instead, although William himself did attend.

The title means, ‘You make me write songs’. The opening was very striking – making me jump! The soprano soloist had an amazing voice and began the piece very powerfully. The tune moved very smoothly between the performers, consisting of a soprano, clarinet, harp and double bass and each section contrasted the others. The composition was extremely well performed – I en-

joyed it very much and it did win the Philip Bates Trust Prize.

The next piece “Little secret” was a complete contrast. It was beautifully performed by the composer, Ami Opranova, accompanied by an accomplished jazz pianist, with bass and drums. Because it was extremely well improvised it was difficult to know how much was actually written down. Nevertheless it was a very enjoyable piece.

This was followed by “Things are not the same” by Patrick Ellis, written for bass voice and a saxophone quartet. It was a very melancholy piece and although it was extremely well performed I felt that, contrary to the title, it was ‘very much the same!’ It did win the audience prize indicating that a number of people thought differently.

The final piece, “Sop two, twice – cool air” had a very distinctive Chinese feel. The composer – Sam

Leith Taylor – was influenced by a collection of Chinese poems by Wang Wei and the accompanying picture of the Yellow River. This picture also inspired the fourth instrument, a glass bowl of wet rocks. The soprano soloist was very ably accompanied by flute and guitar, along with the sound of stones being moved about in the water. After the first performance they all formed a circle and sat on

the floor facing inwards; the piece was then repeated much more intimately. I felt it needed to be seen as well as listened to, to get the full effect. This piece was awarded the prize presented by Birmingham Conservatoire. I would like to say a big 'Well done' to all the composers and performers and thank everyone involved for a very enjoyable evening. *Hazel Teale*

## Our Last Concert at the ABH

Our first Touch of Basil was held in the Adrian Boult Hall of Birmingham Conservatoire in September 2000. We were told at that time that we were unlikely to be able to use ABH for too long in the future because it was to be replaced. The concert on September 26<sup>th</sup> 2015 will be the last concert in Paradise Square for certain.

We have to say an enormous thank you to Birmingham Conservatoire for allowing us to use such a prestigious venue over the years. Over 1700 performers have taken part since 2000. They will have been inspired by Birmingham's old Conservatoire; let us hope that further generations of young performers will similarly be inspired at the new venue in Eastside near Curzon Street Station, due to be completed in the summer of 2017.

This year we have a wonderful line-up of performers to suit all tastes from rock through to newly composed pieces from the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



Regular performers like Heart of England Singers and the Tom Walker Trio will be joined by winners of the Philip Bates performance prizes at John Willmott and Bishop Vesey's schools and winners of the Ashleyan Opera and Philip Bates composing prizes at Birmingham Conservatoire.

We are delighted that Ex Cathedra Academies of Vocal Music are able to join us again and particularly welcome for the first time the Coventry Corps of Drums directed by Myles Nottingham. So please join us for the last concert at Paradise Circus. *Martin Bates*



# Ashleyan Opera Prize 2015

What a fantastic evening's entertainment we experienced with ten post-graduate singers hotly contesting this year's Ashleyan Opera Prize.

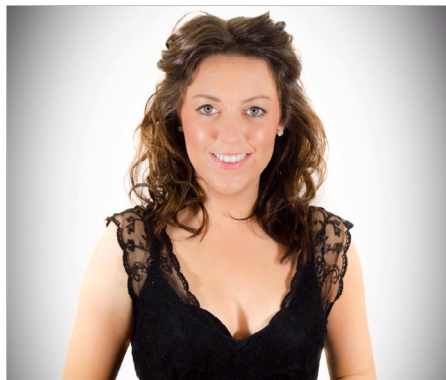
Phillippa Lay has a very promising powerful soprano voice but needs to work on opening up her high notes. Zulkifi bin Zainul, countertenor, showed some improvement since last year.

Victoria Adams and Elizabeth Adams, both sopranos and we think unrelated, had also performed in last year's competition. Both gave a good account of themselves, Victoria with Handel and Verdi and Elizabeth with Mozart and an interesting aria by Morrison, from 'The Chinese Bridge'. Eleanor Moore, soprano, followed Elizabeth and needed a more varied programme as she sang two Mozart arias.

Wesley Biggs's light pleasant baritone ideally suited 'O Ruddier than the Cherry' from *Acis and Galatea* by Handel. He followed this with 'Come Paride vezzoso' from *L'Elisir d'Amore* by Donizetti. Bass baritone Tom Considine showed a great deal of promise but the aria from Verdi's *Macbeth* was a little too big for his voice at the moment.

Claudia Wood impressed with her full tone, singing arias by Handel and Offenbach; we felt she

was a contender for the prize. Coloratura soprano Ying Min Lin also greatly impressed and dazzled us with her vocal dexterity and high notes in Handel and Massenet; she may like to work on her diction a little, however.



*Dierdre McCabe*

The final offering of the evening came from Deirdre McCabe, soprano. She was worth waiting for and gave us a superbly acted and sung 'Jewel Song' from Gounod's *Faust*, followed by Donizetti's 'Quel guardo il cavaliere' from *Don Pasquale*.

After giving well-considered and encouraging feed-back to all the competitors, adjudicator Yvonne Lea awarded the Ashleyan Opera Prize to Deirdre McCabe and highly commended Ying Min Lin. Deirdre will be performing at Touch of Basil on September 26<sup>th</sup> *Sue & Martin Bates*





# Basil's Bunch

The group 'Basil's Bunch' is a regular feature in every Touch of Basil concert. It was set up by Philip's friends from Bishop Vesey's School in Sutton Coldfield, which he attended between the ages of 11-18. These friends shared a love of music and performance. Recently the members have been scattered all over the country, so rehearsals have only been possible a few hours before the concert. There have been around 25 members of Basil's Bunch since the concerts began in 2000. This article will focus upon 4 of the original members:



## Grace Alexander-Scott

studied at Guildford School of Acting, and is now an actor and arts educator living and working in London. She has toured internationally with the show 'Stuck' and worked in the West End as an understudy for Mike Leigh.

In the early days of the Basil concerts, Grace recalls "when actual rehearsals happened before the day itself that was when most people lived close to each other still".



**Jon Chatwin** finished his PhD in English Literature at Exeter in 2009. He then wrote a book 'Anywhere Out of the World: The Work of Bruce Chatwin' which was published in 2012. Between 2010 and 2013 Jon lived in China teaching, travelling and writing.

He has just secured a teaching post in Birmingham and is returning in the near future. Jon contributed to Basil's Bunch mostly in the early Monty Python days and has been more commonly seen as a solo performer of piano and voice at A Touch of Basil in recent years.



**Jon Styles** has written music for theatre, worked as a researcher for the Oxford English Dictionary, and has toured England & Germany as an improvising musician.

He moved to Berlin in 2010 to teach English and Maths, and to develop his skills in performing and composing. In his free time he is learning to speak Russian and to play the French horn.

Jon has been a loyal member of the bunch and participated regularly until moving to Germany. He added notable strength to the tenor line and provided support during rehearsals.



**Christy Del Strother** is a teacher of pupils with special needs in Birmingham. She currently sings with City of Birmingham choir and a small chamber choir called 'Enchant'.

Grace and Christie have been instrumental in leading and conducting the group, and have done an excellent job of selecting and arranging the pieces performed by Basil's Bunch. Christy has often accompanied on the piano.

Christy recalls one of Basil's Bunch's early performances: "I definitely remember a Monty Python repertoire where the lads sang 'Knights of the Round Table' with saucepans on their heads!





# Who We Helped 2014-2015

This year the Trust has been able to support a wide range of young people in their artistic pursuits, including:

**artsNK jumpstart boys** – crash & floor mats for 11-17 year old boys' breakdance / acrobatic workshops  
**On the Edge** Birmingham Youth Fusion Orchestra – purchase of double bass

**rarescale** – Philip Bates Trust bursary for deserving student at summer school for low flutes & composers

**Coventry Corps of Drums** – Towards purchase of a good 2nd hand set of instruments

**Dyslexia Association of Staffs** – Photography course for young dyslexics

**Jonathan Newsome** – Castle Bromwich music graduate – scores / workshop & concert attendance for MMus

**Lauren Greaves** – Music management masters – books

**Olivia Bax** – sculpture MA - resins & moulds

**Camilla Marchant** – student flautist – repair & maintenance of flute & piccolo

**Carrie – Ann Williams** – purchase of opera scores – last year's Ashleyan Opera Prize winner & Touch of Basil performer

**Matthew Bates** (no relation!) – young ballet dancer Royal Ballet School – ballet shoes

**Samantha Guest-Guinnee** – Leicester dancer - ballet & dance shoes

**Andrew Hedley** – euphonium -National Youth Brass Band course – help with fee

**Vernan Arteaga Clark** – Grade 8 cellist - National Youth Chamber Orchestra course – help with fee

**Brendan Connellan** – Grade 8 at 11 French horn player - 2nd award – help with lesson costs

**Georgina Bloomfield** – young violinist - 2nd award towards National Children's Orchestra course fee -Touch of Basil performer



*Coventry Corps of Drums*