



Registered Charity No. 0194937

# Basil's News

**This has been a great year** for the Philip Bates Trust. We had a wonderful Touch of Basil concert last September, an enjoyable Games & Quiz evening in March, and considered 35 applications for funding, an increase from 23 the previous year. Come along to support us again on September 28th for an unbelievably varied evening of music at Birmingham Conservatoire in a Touch of Basil 2013, raising money to help young people involved in the arts. It is a real thrill to know that The Junior Academy of Vocal Music will return then after a break of 8 years - who can forget how they entertained us back in 2005?!

## Games and Quiz Night 2013

The Philip Bates Trust Games and Quiz Night took place on Saturday 9th March 2013 at Arden Hall in Castle Bromwich. The evening included a general knowledge quiz round organised by Stan & Sue Gamble, pictionary on the subject of towns, a music quiz where Martin Bates played TV theme tunes backwards, a 'guess the faces' and numbers round from Alan Spiers, Railway Riot, 'Items in an Envelope Game' organised by Karen Moulton and the alphabet game. Jacket potatoes with various fillings, followed by cakes, were eagerly consumed at the refreshment break. Over £500 was raised for the Trust and great fun was had by all. *Julie Larkin*



# Last Year's Touch Of Basil

The evening of Saturday September 22<sup>nd</sup> 2012 began with Ellen Mellington-Pritchard, a school friend of Philip's, reading words from the song "In my Life" by John Lennon. Then the Heart of England Singers gave a rousing "Zadok the Priest" to open the musical proceedings, accompanied by Margaret Croucher. A round "2012", composed by conductor Martin Bates, was a light-hearted tribute to the Olympics and the Queen's Jubilee, then "Brightly Dawns our Wedding Day" from the Mikado concluded the choir's slot.

Soprano Susan Bates gave a rendition of "Summertime" by Gershwin, accompanied by Martin Bates who also acted as compère for the evening. Next Daniel James, a piano pupil of Martin's, played a jazzy number "Black Coffee", followed by long-time supporter and friend Stephen Davis, tenor, giving a great performance of Handel's aria "Blessed are they that considereth the poor and needy".

Pete Yelding, composer, won the previous year's Philip Bates Prize for Composers and Songwriters and his piece "Silhouettes Smiling" was next on the programme, with Pete himself on vocals and guitar. Clarinet, cello, piano and drums were also included

in the ensemble. It was an interesting piece, although perhaps not quite as sparkling as when performed at the composition prize final, as some elements had been changed.

Neil Robinson and Kelly Tye are both ex-pupils of John Willmott school but had not sung together for some years. Neil is now a teacher in London and directs musicals and Kelly works in the concert office at Birmingham Conservatoire, organising bookings in the Adrian Boulton Hall (including ours!). Kelly began their group of songs from shows with "Always a Bridesmaid, Never a Bride" followed by Neil singing "Lonely Town" from On the Town by Bernstein. They concluded with the duet "I'll Know" from Guys and Dolls. The audience really appreciated this duo.

Christy del Strother, another school friend of Philip's, now teaches music at Bishop Walsh School in Sutton Coldfield. She brought along and lead her choir "Vox" in two items, "Here am I to worship" and "Run" by Snow Patrol, to finish the first half.

An unusual start to the second half was a sketch devised by Music Theatre Prize winner CJ Webley from John Willmott School, featuring



an interesting discussion between teachers in a staff room. Next, and providing a great contrast, the Tom Walker trio gave two rousing rock numbers, “Old Love” by Eric Clapton and “Love you anyway” written by Tom, who was once again on top form on vocals and guitar.

Basil’s Bunch, a group of Philip’s friends including some from far-flung parts of the UK, was next on the programme. The first

Philip Bates Performance Prize at Bishop Vesey School. Playing on his violin an excerpt from the Partita in D Minor by Bach, he was extremely impressive.

A star performance by Rachel Bowden, soprano, winner of the 2012 Ashleyan Opera Prize absolutely wowed the audience. She began with the ever-popular “O mio babbino caro” by Puccini, then came an unusual and highly



*The Tom Walker Trio relaxing at rehearsal*

rehearsal for their two items was earlier on the day itself amid many animated “How are you?”s and they gave a creditable performance in harmony of “Rule the World” and “You’ve got the Love”.

Josh Tooley was the winner of the

diverting aria by Jonathan Dove, “It’s my wedding”, which included an amusing bit of business with a tiara suddenly produced from inside the grand piano.

“A hard act to follow”, muttered vocalist Devon Brown as he came



*Rachel Bowden's crowning performance*

forward to perform, but he was equally impressive in a completely different genre. First singing and accompanying himself in his own composition "God cares for you" and then performing excerpts from Martin Bates's rock opera "King", his rich velvety voice rang round the Adrian Boult Hall. The solo "Black Messiah" was followed by "I had a dream" and "Lead us Luther King" in conjunction with the Heart of England Singers.

The Heart of England then gave us "Rose of England" by Ivor Novello and the uplifting and moving "Like an Eagle" by Carl Strommen to finish the evening: almost – but not quite! Everyone including the audience joined in "Thank you for the music" by Abba, with Neil and Kelly singing the verses, to round off a Touch of Basil till 2013. *Sue Bates*

## Ashleyan Opera Prize 2013

The 2013 Ashleyan Opera Prize final took place on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> April in the Recital Hall at Birmingham Conservatoire. There were five contenders for the prize and it was a closely fought contest. Jonathan French accompanied brilliantly, adapting himself to different musical styles throughout the evening.

First on the programme was soprano Sophie Pullen, opening with the Jewel Song "O Dieu! – Ah! Je ris" from Faust. She caught the attention of the audience as she described finding the jewel box and its contents, acting out adorning herself with items of jewellery and seeing herself in the mirror. Her diction was excellent here. Next came an aria from L'Elisir d'Amore by Donizetti. The rôle of Adina is best known for its sparkling coloratura, but here we had a more plaintive song, with Adina regretting how unkind she has been to the steadfast young man who loves her.

The second contestant was mezzo-soprano Rosemary Thickett. She opened her programme with "Ah Tanya, Tanya" from Eugene Onegin by Tchaikovsky. Carefree and frivolous Olga is teasing her sister Tanya. "Be like me and stop reading those romantic novels. Young men





prefer a lively girl”. Little does she suspect the awaiting tragedy! Rosemary gave a graphic rendering of this aria against the backing of Tchaikovsky’s light and skipping accompaniment. This was followed by two well-chosen contrasting arias, “What would Mrs Herring say?” from Albert Herring by Benjamin Britten and “I am easily assimilated” from Candide by Bernstein to conclude a well-rounded programme.

Soprano Louise Martyn followed, beginning with the Countess’s recitative and aria from Le Nozze di Figaro “E Susanna non vien” leading into “Dove sono”. Here the long rolling phrases were well executed with good breath control, as the unsure Countess reveals her concern that her husband no longer loves her. The tempo changes as she decides she must try to win him back. Louise’s very dignified appearance was suited to the Countess, which changed as she slipped off the jacket of her gown to use as a ‘prop’ for Britten’s Embroidery Aria. However, there was no attempt to ‘embroider’ it – surely some mime was needed here.

The fourth contestant was mezzo-soprano Claire Barnett-Jones. What can I say? This young lady treated us to a stream of beautiful tone when she started to sing her first aria, “Va!



*Claire Barnett-Jones congratulated by adjudicator Russell Smythe*

Laisse couler mes larmes” from Werther by Massenet. Although possessing a large voice there was no hint of excessive vibrato. Next followed “Where shall I fly?” from Hercules. Here we had a complete change of style – lots of contrast in the dynamics. Claire dealt with Handel’s semiquavers competently - a most delightful performer.

Last came Amelia Burns, soprano. There was little characterisation in the aria “Padre Germani” from Idomeneo by Mozart, and it was sung at one level throughout. *continued page 8*



# Who Did We Help This Year?

We supported three individual applicants this year in addition to those who won our annual prizes. Alexander Orme, saxophone, is training to become a professional jazz musician and practises five hours daily. He gets through three boxes of reeds monthly and applied to us for help with the cost. We were able to fund a three months supply of alto saxophone reeds.

Sophie Chin and Brendan Connellan, both aged nine, received help with fees for the National Children's Orchestra courses. We gave Brendan support last year and he has continued to make

such excellent progress, passing his Grade 6 French Horn and Grade 5 piano with distinction, that we felt we wanted to help him again. Sophie is also a very promising musician and sent us a beautiful handwritten letter explaining how much playing the violin means to her.

Ex Cathedra's Junior Academy of Vocal Music has rehearsed on a project by project basis in the past, but now in 2013 they are offering weekly vocal sessions to youngsters to provide continuity. This will build on the enthusiasm generated by the very successful Singing Playgrounds project



*Ex Cathedra's Junior Academy of Vocal Music*



*THSH Jazz Summer School in full swing*

which was rolled out to a number of schools, particularly targeting children from deprived areas of Birmingham. The Philip Bates Trust was pleased to be able to support the Junior Academy with funding towards the cost of a vocal tutor.

Another musical project for young people that we supported in 2012 was Jazz Summer School, run by THSH (Town Hall Symphony Hall). This project aimed to develop the musical skills of fifty young people from Birmingham aged 8-19 through a series of workshops with professional jazz musicians. At the end of the project they showcased their achievements in a rush hour performance in the foyer of Symphony Hall, and were encouraged to form a Youth Jazz Ensemble (Jazzlines Ensemble) to

continue developing their skills. Young people from low-income backgrounds were particularly targeted, with a view to raising their ambitions and increasing their chances of accessing further education or training.

Two Birmingham Conservatoire graduates began *mf community music*, taking music workshops to people isolated in hospital. In order to benefit their work on paediatric wards, we were pleased to give them a grant to buy chime bars, boom whackers and a djembe.

The North Staffs Carers Association is a really worthwhile charity that provides support to young carers. Young people, some as young as 5, are sometimes called upon to give informal care to a close relative who



is disabled in some way. This can include help with everyday tasks such as personal care, shopping, cooking, cleaning etc. and sometimes they have to assume a level of responsibility normally expected of an adult.

North Staffs Carers Association organises workshops and activities for these youngsters where they can meet together with others in a similar situation and forget their responsibilities for a while. The Philip Bates Trust was very pleased to be able to pay the costs of providing an African drumming workshop for these young carers.

Another worthwhile charity is the Monty Hind Club, based in Nottingham. They run various leisure activities aimed at young people in the area, including some geared towards groups of youngsters with specific problems such as Aspergers Syndrome, Chrones disease, renal failure, diabetes etc. The particular project we helped to fund was a course of drama workshops for young autistic teenagers where they could act out various social situations, discussing and rehearsing appropriate responses and courses of action.

We are looking forward to helping more deserving causes at our next Trustees meeting in July. *Sue Bates*

*From page 5....* “Je dis que rien de m’épouvante” from Bizet’s Carmen suited her better, although the phrases needed more shape. Here we have Michaela the village girl who has need of braving a hazardous journey to deliver an important message to Don José. She sings “I said I would not be afraid” and prays to God to protect her.

Adjudicator Russell Smythe commended all the contestants and gave them useful advice. The audience was not surprised when he chose Claire Barnett-Jones as the worthy winner. *Margaret Asher*

### **A New Bates-Gamble**

Congratulations to Rachel, Mark and Beth on the safe arrival of Lucy Florence Poppy Bates-Gamble on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2013. Although she’s only tiny, 5 lb 9 oz at birth, she’s already made a big impact!

