

# Basil's News

2016

## Welcome to Basil's News

The annual newsletter of the Philip Bates Trust. Visit our website at [www.philipbatesttrust.org.uk](http://www.philipbatesttrust.org.uk)

## A Touch of Basil 2016

Most people will be aware of the necessary change to our venue for the 2016 Touch of Basil. It will take place at Bishop Vesey's Grammar School in Sutton Coldfield on October 1<sup>st</sup>. Philip was a student there until 1999. There is a music room at Bishop Vesey's dedicated to his memory in regular use for instrumental lessons and practice throughout the week.

The concert will take place in Big School starting at 7pm and will again be filled with performers associated with Philip's trust. Winners of the two school prizes at John Willmott and Bishop Vesey's schools will be there along with Ashleyan Opera Prize winner Andrew Randall and a winning piece from the Philip Bates Prize for Composers and Songwriters.

Georgina Bloomfield 12, will join us for the third time to thrill with her brilliant violin playing. The young voices of the Ex Cathedra Training Choirs will also return to show some of the most celebrated music education in the country and Bishop Vesey's own music department will be represented by a clarinet quartet. Thanks to all the staff there for their ongoing support. *Martin Bates*

## Margaret Asher

### 1928 - 2016

Margaret Asher, well-loved Granny to Philip, Rachel, George, David and Andrew and Mum to Sue and Jenni, passed away in March this year. She had a long, happy and fruitful life until the last few years when poor hearing, eyesight and mobility made things difficult.

From an early age she was an outstanding soprano soloist, studying with Victor Thomas in Leicester and undertaking professional oratorio engagements all over the Midlands and sometimes further afield. She was a frequent soloist of choice with the Leicester Bach Choir under George Gray and on other occasions sang alongside well-known names such as Hedde Nash, Gladys Ripley and Janet Baker.

The following is adapted from a Leicester Mercury article in tribute by music critic Neil Crutchley:

“Already a well-known soloist, when, in 1959, her husband Stanley Asher formed the Ashleyan Opera Group, Margaret sang many of the great leading soprano roles, including Tosca, Madam Butterfly, Aida, Tatyana in Eugene Onegin and Desdemona in Otello. The company’s productions ran for a week, usually at the Little Theatre and later, also at the Haymarket.

After Stanley Asher died in 1987, Margaret was determined that the company should carry on. With a new conductor and a cast of outstanding local singers, the Ashleyans continued well into the new century. In fact, in later years, Margaret took on the onerous job of producer and brought to it a wealth of knowledge and experience.

Margaret was a generous mentor and when Ashleyan Opera disbanded in 2004, it was decided to use the group’s outstanding funds to endow a prize for singers at Birmingham Conservatoire. Each year, a competition is held in the Recital Hall and the winner



*Margaret Asher*



is awarded the Ashleyan Opera Prize, so, happily, the name lives on.”

In addition to her musical commitments, Margaret ran her theatrical costume business ‘Stagewear’ for many years, based in a large

warehouse containing thousands of items overlooking the Leicestershire cricket ground in Grace Road. Assisted by her loyal staff, she supplied full sets of costumes for many amateur productions throughout the UK, including Ashleyan Opera.

*Sue Bates*



*Margaret Asher as Turandot in 1969*



# Birmingham's New Conservatoire

Birmingham's spanking new conservatoire will open to students in 2017. The Philip Bates Trust, talking to the new principal Julian Lloyd Webber, hoped to take one of the earliest bookings in September 2017 for its annual Touch of Basil concert. However, it looks as if we shall be just a little early because they will still be testing the new facility at that time.

As I write this article the last few bookings are taking place at the Adrian Boult Hall. It will then be razed to the ground before other parts of the conservatoire; present students and those coming in September 2016 will still need to

use what is left of the old building.

I have been around long enough to remember the previous conservatoire, then called Birmingham School of Music, in Dale End. Sue and I remember in a similar way how we had to cope with the music department at Manchester University being a converted cinema. How fortunate BCU music students should consider themselves to study in the new building alongside Millennium Point, not far from the old Curzon St station on Eastside. They must make the most of their good fortune. *Martin Bates*



*An artist's impression of one of the new concert halls to open in 2017*





## Ashleyan Opera Prize 2016

This year's Ashleyan Opera Prize gave a fascinating insight into the nature and variety of operatic singing, with seven post-graduate contestants offering a wide range of content and styles, including works from the eighteenth to the twenty-first century.

Livia King sang three items, Mozart's 'Batti, batti' from 'Don Giovanni', Weill's 'Meine Herren, meine Mutter prägte' from 'Mahagonny' and Dove's wonderfully comic 'Tiara' song – Adelaide's 'It's my wedding' aria from 'The Enchanted Pig'. She coped well with the very different approaches needed by the pieces, giving an especially exciting performance of the Dove.

Claudia Wood also presented three items, Mozart's 'In quali eccessi, mi tradi' from 'Don Giovanni', Britten's 'Embroidery' aria from 'Peter Grimes' and Puccini's 'Tu che di gel sei cinta' from 'Turan-dot', and gave an impressive account of all of them.

Robert Tilson then gave Mozart's 'Dalla sua pace' from 'Don Giovanni', and Puccini's 'Che gelida manina' from 'La Bohème', adapting himself very well to the very different approaches needed for them. All three of these first singers were accompanied by Jonathan French.

Next, Michael Lam, accompanied by Vienna Ho, performed Mozart's 'Hai già vinta la causa' from 'Le Nozze di Figaro', Donizetti's 'Come Paride vezzoso' from



*Andrew Randall*

'L'Elisir d'amore' and Gounod's 'Avant de quitter ces lieux' from 'Faust', giving exciting performances of all three.

Naomi Hickman sang Mozart's 'Se il padre perdei' from 'Idomeneo' and Massenet's 'Il est doux, il est bon' from 'Hérodiade' with great assurance.

Andrew Randall gave splendid performances of Korngold's 'Mein Sehnen, mein Wähnen' from 'Die Tote Stadt' and Mozart's 'Hai già vinta la causa', both very powerful and appropriately theatrical.



Naomi and Andrew were both accompanied by Bernard Tan.

The last contestant, Eleanor Moore, accompanied by Ka Man Tsang, sang Handel's 'Heart, the seat of soft delight' from 'Acis and Galatea' and Mozart's 'Batti, batti'. Both items demonstrated the sweetness of her voice.

All the accompanists provided very sound support for the singers.

Andrew Ashwin, the adjudicator, gave the contestants a miniature master class at the end of the recital, with one special point of praise for each of the performances and one area for possible improvement, and awarded the overall prize to Andrew Randall, with a commendation for individual aria going to Livia King for 'It's my wedding'.

*Geoff Barnbrook*

## Georgina Bloomfield in Prestbury

On Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> June Sue and I travelled to St Peter's Church, Prestbury, near Macclesfield to listen to a recital given by Georgina Bloomfield.

Many of you will have experienced first hand at The Adrian Boult Hall 12 year old Georgina's exciting and mature performances. This time she started with Beethoven's powerful 'Spring Sonata' and also included Brahms' 'FAE Sonata' and Vaughan Williams' 'The Lark Ascending'.

It was a tough programme which she handled with apparent ease, hiding the hours of practice which must have gone into its preparation. As a disarming interlude Georgina sang 'A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square'.

She will be playing again on October 1<sup>st</sup> at Touch of Basil.



*Georgina Bloomfield*

Philip Bates Trust has supported Georgina twice in 2013 and 2015; Georgina very kindly returned the favour by raising money for the Trust at her concert in Prestbury.

*Martin Bates*



# Action Committee

The 'Action Committee' comprises nine people who are connected to the Trust and the Bates family in a variety of ways. The Action Committee meets every three months to discuss and develop fundraising events and other projects regarding promotion and communication of trust activities, for example the trust website and newsletter. This article will focus on four of the committee members.

## Sarah Dudley

Sarah Dudley is native to Sutton Coldfield, where she was taught music by Martin Bates and Jeffrey Skidmore at John Willmott school before going on to the University of Huddersfield to study voice and viola. She has performed across Europe with many chamber choirs, visiting most major UK cathedrals and prominent concert halls across the continent.

Sarah teaches music at Aldridge School, where she has worked for 15 years. As part of this rôle she runs a girls' choir of fifty voices. She also freelances as a viola player or can be found supporting her own two children Evie and Toby in their musical pursuits.

Sarah has sung in and conducted Basil's Bunch in the 'Touch of

Basil' concert. She currently sings with the Sutton Coldfield Chamber choir, performing a variety of works from Britten to Vaughan Williams and is shortly off to



*Sarah Dudley*

perform the Fauré Requiem in music festivals in the Burgundy region of France. Sarah can often be found playing viola in local orchestras, and frequently accompanies the Heart of England singers.

## John Moulton

John's own admission is that "Apart from performing *Three Little Maids* at a Heart of England summer concert, John has never performed in public nor does he have a musical background".

Born in Erdington in Birmingham "many, many years ago" John is



now a retired Communications Engineer with a portfolio of three current jobs.

John is married to Karen, through whom he first met the Bates family twenty-four years ago at St Clements Church in Castle Bromwich, with the other connections being the Heart of England Singers and as a family friend. He has three sons and currently lives in Rugby.

John has a shared interest in railways (steam, diesel and electric) with Martin, and spent time at Severn Valley Railway and Tysley with Martin and Philip. John supports Philip Bates Trust with event photography, as a member of the Action Committee and is willing to take on any job to help out. He has a passion for MG cars, currently owning a MGF.



*John Moulton*

## **Kirsty Robinson**

Kirsty knew Philip at St Clement's Church where they were servers together. She completed a degree in English with Qualified Teacher Status in 2004 and has been teaching primary aged pupils ever since.

She left mainstream education in 2008 and now has the privilege of working as a hospital teacher, teaching primary pupils of all ages, as well as lead-



*Kirsty Hopson*

ing primary teaching and learning across the whole school.

Currently Kirsty is enjoying a break from work and is instead focusing on the best role of all, being a new mum to six month old Elsie. She enjoys regular trips to the theatre to watch touring productions and has a season ticket to see all Birmingham Royal Ballet productions. Kirsty says that her favourite thing of all is "spending time





with my husband James and Elsie along with family and friends”.

## Mark Gamble

Mark was a school friend of Phil's which is how he became involved in the Trust. They were in a band together which was called 'Shaven Monkey'. He is an active member of the action committee and has developed the Trust's website. Mark has provided essential support to the sound engineers at the Touch of Basil concerts, and has sung in Basil's Bunch at every recent concert.



*Mark Gamble*

In his work as a town planner Mark has worked to regenerate Birmingham City Centre with a particular focus on The Jewellery Quarter. He has a life long interest in technology, and is about to complete a degree in computing & IT with the Open University. This reflects his passion for life long learning.

Mark lives in Bentley Heath with

Rachel and his two daughters where they have slowly been renovating a former police house. Mark's life aspiration is to be one of the first tourists on the moon.

## 2015 Composition Prize

There were four compositions vying for prizes last November in the Recital Hall at Birmingham Conservatoire.

**Peter Longworth** *Myrica* This beautifully written piece was evocative and sensitively written. *Myrica* is a setting of two poems by the Italian poet, Giovanni Pascoli (1855-1912) which depict scenes from rural life in Tuscany. Written for soprano, trumpet, violin and piano, it received an excellent performance from the London-based musicians, headed by soloist Marion Wylie.

**Harriet Grainger** *Elizabeth's Aria*. 'Elizabeth's Aria' is based on recorded stories, collected items and photographs associated with the role of St Fagans National History Museum in Cardiff as a First World War hospital. Elizabeth Radcliffe's family is too poor to feed an unwaged mouth. An employment opportunity as a VAD nurse at St Fagans seems heaven-sent. Elizabeth has managed to arrange an interview, which is to happen tomorrow. She has been feverishly studying the 'Catechism of Home



*Composition Prize 2016 Finalists*

Nursing' and is drawn to the gates and grounds of the castle to settle her anxieties. This was a very affecting piece with haunting melodies passing between voice and instruments. Soprano Jacquelyne Hill gave a superb rendition of Harriet's score, ably supported by a harpist, cellist and clarinettist from the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

**Daniel Blanco Albert** Columna Vertebral: *Sageta de Foc*. *Sageta de Foc* is the first poem written in Catalan by Joan Salvat-Papasseit. It is a revolutionary song, but written in a very humanistic way. In the poem, he calls out to the young people to fight against the powers of intellectualism and to trust more in their hearts.

The rich sonorous voice of bass Ali Donaghue declaimed the repeated unaccompanied phrases of the song, interspersed by energetic figures on the three instru-

ments - violin, viola and trumpet – all playing together. At times the voice and instruments overlapped, culminating in various loud shouted words such as “*Sageta de foc*” (Fire arrow) and “*Victòria*” (Victory). This was an unusual, interesting and effective piece by Birmingham Conservatoire student Daniel.

**Alex Paxton** The Pomegranate Song. The Pomegranate Song is inspired by a song by Thomas Handley, an English comedian of the 30s and 40s called “How many pips are there in a pomegranate?” Text sources also include Exodus and the book of Habakkuk.

Although this piece was cleverly and competently written, I felt it did not convey the light-hearted comedy of either the song that inspired it or the printed lyrics. As a consequence I felt rather let down. The tricky, angular vocal line was extremely well negotiated by mezzo-



soprano Rachel Maby, with an unusual instrumentation of alto sax, trombone and violin.

After the competitive pieces had been concluded Susan Bates, soprano, sang 'In Stiller Nacht' by Philip Bates, accompanied on the piano by husband Martin as a trib-

ute to their son.

Three prizes were donated by the Philip Bates Trust, the Conservatoire adjudication going to Daniel Blanco Albert and the Philip Bates Trust adjudication to Harriet Grainger, who also received the Audience Prize. *Sue Bates*

## Who We Helped 2015-2016

**Safi Kaduji**, Banbury – towards the cost of piano lessons

**Adam Ryan**, Birmingham – violin – help with National Children's Orchestra course fee

**Charlotte Howdle**, Lichfield – 14 yrs – lightweight violin case needed due to spinal problem

**Harriet & Jemimah Quick**, Haywards Heath –both sisters play viola – towards orchestral course fees

**Timothy Mitchell**, Thornbury, Gloucs – 10 yrs – clarinet – help with National Children's Orchestra course fee

**Willard Carter**, Wells, Somerset -13 yrs – cello - Purcell School – contribution towards the cost of a fine quality bow

**Daniel Smith**, Stratford upon Avon – 'A' level student keen on drama, taking part in shows outside school – towards singing lessons

**Jacob Fulford** – Warwickshire –

16 yrs - home educated Asperger's – working towards studying music at University – help with cost of a digital piano

**Nina Kümin**, Leamington Spa - 17 yrs – violin – National Youth String Orchestra course fees

**Isobel Scott**, Biggin Hill – violin – Masters at RNCM – cost of strings and bow repairs

**Joel Williams**, Carshalton – tenor – Masters in Vocal Performance RCM – books, scores & additional coaching

**Samuel Oram**, Acton, ex Birmingham Conservatoire – baritone – Masters in Vocal and Operatic Performance RCM – scores and coaching

**James Jessiman**, York / Bridlington / London – MA in Printmaking, Royal College of Art – printmaking materials

**Louise Blackstock**, Birmingham City University – 3<sup>rd</sup> year fashion design student– help with cost of



fabrics to make garments for her final show

**Sharon Grant**, Manchester – materials to run therapeutic art sessions for youngsters in a Pupil Referral Unit.

**Jazzlines Vocal Group**, Birmingham – cost of masterclass to develop the vocal skills of the young people participating in the group

**Pandora Diverse Arts**, Milton Keynes – a theatre group for home

educated pupils, some with disabilities – towards the cost of canvas, paint & brushes for scenery construction and sewing machines for making costumes, all of which the youngsters do themselves (with adult supervision!)

**Syrian Community of Leeds** – working with young Syrian refugees - cost of hiring Leeds Grammar School music teacher to lead Saturday choir project “The Missing Souls” *Sue Bates*

## Fundraising Made Easy

Thank you so much to all our supporters, some of whom gave individual donations throughout the year. These can be gift aided if you are a tax payer, so please, if you give us a donation and are a tax payer, do fill in one of our gift aid forms. Various events raised funds for the Trust, including our ever-popular Games and Quiz night.

If you're a regular amazon or ebay user or shop with nearly three thousand online retailers, you can now support us at no extra cost to yourself through easyfundraising. All you need to do is register with them at [www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk) and choose Philip Bates Trust as your cause so that we can receive your bonuses.

When you shop online, first log on to easyfundraising then access

amazon, ebay or any of nearly three thousand retailers through them and the retailer will donate a percentage of what you spend to the Trust. Alternatively, you can download the donation reminder toolbar to sit top right on your browser and click on the easyfundraising 'e' logo to access your chosen shopping site.

Participating retailers include John Lewis, House of Fraser, Debenhams, Next, Argos, Currys, Viking, PCWorld, Staples, wowcher, groupon, travelzoo, trainline and many other travel, hotel, holiday and flights booking sites such as easyjet, flybe, ibis hotels and Thomas Cook. There's also an easyfundraising app available to download for your mobile from google play or the apple store.