

# Basil's News

2017



## 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)

## Newsletter Changes

This year we are asking our readers a question: how would you like to receive this newsletter in the future?

At the moment the postage costs of paper newsletters are one of the Trust's most significant expenses and we are considering how we can make savings so that more of your donations are used for the Trust's main aim of advancing the artistic education of young people.

We are also aware that times are changing and many of you may now prefer to read the newsletter in an electronic format.

With this in mind we would like you to let us know how you would like to receive your newsletter next year. Please get in touch using the details below and tell us if you would prefer your newsletter a) by post b) by email or c) by social media (Twitter/Facebook etc.). In order that we can update our database we'd also appreciate it if you could please give us your up-to-date postal address and email address.

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# A Touch of Basil 2016

Welcome to the review of the 2016 Touch of Basil concert, which this year was held at Bishop Vesey's Grammar School. What a pleasure it was to be performing in the school hall where Philip and many of his friends spent so much of their time. I hope the occasion brought back lots of happy memories for those past pupils and parents of BVGS.

The concert opened with Philip's cousin, David, reading the uplifting poem *She is Gone* dedicated to the memory of Margaret Asher who sadly passed away earlier in the year. Margaret was a wonderful Granny to all her grandchildren and really enjoyed coming to see all the variety and talent brought together in each Touch of Basil concert.

The first musical item was brought to us by Martin's own choir, The Heart of England Singers, where they treated us to a selection of *We've Only Just Begun*, *A Nightingale Sang in Berkley Square* and Howard Goodall's popular theme from *The Vicar of Dibley*, *Psalm 23*.

Lauren Miller then displayed to us why she so ably won the Philip Bates Music Theatre Prize 2016 at John Willmott School with her

performance of *I Know Where I've Been* from *Hairspray*. Bishop Vesey's own clarinet ensemble followed with Mozart's *Voi Che Sapete* and a lively arrangement of *The Bare Necessities* before Susan Bates sang Purcell's beautiful *Evening Hymn*.

It is always a treat to hear the delightful voice and piano skills of



*Rhys Jones of The Bacon Butties*



*The Heart of England Singers at A Touch of Basil 2016*

John Chatwin and this year he did not disappoint when performing his own composition *Valley Below*. Another performer who keeps returning is the flourishing young violinist Georgina Bloomfield who mesmerised the audience with her interpretations of Cesar Franck's Violin Sonata, the delicate *Intermezzo* from Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* and the spirited *Czardas* by Monti. It is a real delight to see Georgina developing into such a capable violinist.

The first half came to a close with a variety of songs from Ex Cathedra's Academies. These

cater for tiny children beginning their musical careers with a range of improvised musical stories up to the more accomplished Girls' Academy showing off their developing voices with control and musicality and a clear love of singing. Whatever stage these singers are at it certainly sent the audience off to their interval drinks with a song in their heart and a smile on their face.

Newcomers The Bacon Butties opened the second half with their rousing own compositions *The Bacon Song* and *Hash Tag 3*. It was lovely to see such emerging talent and enthusiasm from Avon



Valley School. In stark contrast, Steve Davis confidently delivered Haydn's aria *In Native Worth* from *The Creation*.

It was good to welcome back Michael Hogg on saxophone after winning the Philip Bates Performance Prize in 2010 and to hear such a confident and self-assured performer tackling such a demanding piece with apparent ease. He played *Pequena Czarda* by Ituralde.

A regular slot in this concert is for the winner of the Philip Bates prize for Composers and Songwriters and tonight we heard Daniel Blanco Albert's setting of *Columna Vertebral: Sageta de Foc* orchestrated for baritone, violin, viola and trumpet. Sonorous unaccompanied baritone declamations alternated with energetic rhythmic figures on the three instruments. This was an effective and unusual piece, culminating in a shout of "Sageta de Foc", meaning "Fire Arrow".

The regular performance from Basil's Bunch treated the audience to *Bring him Home* from *Les Miserables*, *Life on Mars*, a tribute to the late David Bowie and an uplifting arrangement of *Dream a Little Dream of Me*. Again, this lovely bunch of people came together on the day to enjoy

rehearsing and performing this selection of choral arrangements which brought a range of emotions to an appreciative audience.

As we came to the last few items in this range of performances there was certainly no shortage of extravagance as Katie Leader sang Mozart's *Dove Sono* from *The Marriage of Figaro* and Devon Brown returned with an enchanting performance of *Close Every Door* from *Joseph*: they then joined together to duet in *All I Ask of You*, which kept the audience holding their breath until the closing phrase.

To bring this 2016 A Touch of Basil to a close the Heart of England Singers sang out with two Beatles songs and the title song from *Skyfall* before asking the audience to join with them in everybody's favourite hymn, *Jerusalem*, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Charles Hubert Parry composing this patriotic melody.

What a fantastic range of music and performers this annual concert has brought together again. It celebrates music and has the capacity to bring joy to all. I hope you are looking forward to the next one!

*Sarah Dudley*





## A Touch of Basil Back at Bishop Vesey's for 2017

Our annual celebration concert is at Philip's old school again this year on September 30<sup>th</sup> due to the building of the new Birmingham Conservatoire near Millennium Point. New students will start their courses there from September 2017 but, in a recent conversation with Julian Lloyd Webber, he could not guarantee that the concert hall would be up and running smoothly enough for us to be offered a booking so early in the new academic year. The staff at Bishop Vesey's, including Graham Swindells and Wendy Brown, were only too pleased to offer us a return visit.

There will be a tremendous line-up to suit all tastes: Ex Cathedra Academies will perform again as

will winners of Philip's prizes from Bishop Vesey's and John Willmott schools. Winners of the Philip Bates Prize for Composers and Songwriters and The Ashleyn Opera prize will show the high quality of students at Birmingham Conservatoire.

Georgina Bloomfield will play her violin again, including a piece I have written specially for her called *A Day in Town*. Many regular performers will return with a very welcome addition of Sir John Saunders and his daughter Sarah on baroque flute and oboe.

For tickets please call 0121 747 5705.

*Martin Bates*



*Bishop Vesey's Grammar School*

# A Womb of One's Own



This original and memorable play was devised and performed by four young actresses, one of whom - Danica Corns - we had supported last year with funding towards a National Theatre summer course. At that course Danica met the other three performers and they combined their talents to form a small theatre company touring the four-hander production *A Womb of One's Own*.

Trustee Rev Margaret MacLachlan and I went along to see the play when it came to The Old Joint Stock Pub and Theatre, a venue

with a wonderful façade facing Birmingham Cathedral.

The production was extremely slick and effective, at times both funny and tragic. The four performers played different aspects of the main character, Babygirl – debating her situation amongst themselves – plus various other characters she met along the way. The issues surrounding an unwanted pregnancy were fully explored in this challenging yet successful show.

*Sue Bates*



# Ashleyan Opera Prize 2017



*Ashleyan Opera Prize Finalists 2016*

Three of the Trustees, together with friends Jan and Terry Probert and Liz Brown, went along to support this year's competitors in the Ashleyan Opera Prize. It was a bitter sweet occasion because it is certainly the last time we shall go to the old Birmingham Conservatoire venue near the Town Hall and also because Professor Julian Pike, who has organised this event since its inception, is retiring at the end of this academic year. We wish him well with many thanks from the Philip Bates Trust and Ashleyan Opera.

This said, there was a very fine final line-up of singers this year, before moving to the new building in Eastside this September. Of the seven singers five were sopranos, one a mezzo and the single male a baritone.

Roxanne Korda touchingly sang two arias which Margaret Asher had recorded herself and which were played at her funeral last

year. Gounod's *Jewel Song* from *Faust* and *Mi Chiamano Mimi* (*My Name is Mimi*) by Puccini from *La Bohème* were sung with fine musicality and pure tone. She paced her performances extremely well.

Bethany Cox sang *L'Amoro, saro costante* from *Il Re Pastore* by Mozart and *Comme Autrefois* from *The Pearl Fishers* by Bizet. Again some fine singing here, perhaps best in the Bizet. I worried about her top notes being a little tight.

Melissa Guiliano sang *Zeffiretti Lusinghieri* from *Idomeneo* by Mozart and *Willow Song* from *The Ballad of Baby Doe* by Douglas Moore. She sang with a nice line and her singing was well paced. Melissa had a consistent tone throughout all her range except again perhaps right at the top in the Moore piece.

Michael Lam, our sole male, sang *Hai Già Vinta la Causa* from Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* and *Eri*



*Tu* from *The Masked Ball* by Verdi. He had a great operatic delivery, showing an ability to vary his tone in thoroughly convincing performances.

Chan Pui Shan sang two French pieces: Gounod's *Faites lui mes aveux* from *Faust* and Saint-Saëns's *Printemps qui Commence* from *Samson and Delilah*. She showed good characterisation and contrast but I wondered whether the two pieces themselves contrasted enough and I would have liked the music to sound more beautiful.

Catherine Gilbert gave *Oh! Quante Volte* from *I Capuleti e I Montecchi* by Bellini which she sang with ease and style and *Tornami a Vagheggiar* from *Alcina* by Handel which was delivered with stylish

dexterity and particular strength at the top of her range.

Mier Huang sang *Mein Herr Marquis* from Johann Strauss II's *Die Fledermaus* and *Piangero la sorte mia* from *Julius Caesar* by Handel. The opening piece was such fun and the second, a complete contrast, a thoroughly convincing baroque performance. I liked her ability to show light and shade.

Our world famous guest adjudicator Catherine Wyn Rogers awarded the winning prize to Michael Lam with a special commendation to Catherine Gilbert. Michael will move to Hungary before our next Touch of Basil concert on 30<sup>th</sup> September but Catherine has happily agreed to sing for us on that occasion. Don't miss her wonderful voice.

*Martin Bates*

## 2016 Composition Competition

The 2016 Prize for Composers and Songwriters competition was an exciting one, with seven composers vying for the three prizes on offer.

Zoe Dixon's *Three Perspectives* began the evening, with a Baroque line-up of two recorders and harpsichord accompanying the mezzo-soprano and tenor soloists. The first two settings of words by John Milton were convincing Baroque pastiche, the third one was perhaps less successful.

Next came *Compost* by London-based Alex Ho, with atmospheric eerie sounds from his three violins and cello to suggest the working of microbes in the compost. Baritone Thomas Herring gave an effective account of the spare vocal line.

*Bright Star*, a setting of a Keats poem by Claire Victoria Roberts, was extremely well sung by the composer herself. Pianist Arthur Bocaneanu and Gary Farr on trumpet provided instrumental support.





Sam James' *Sleep* was a collection of three songs on the same theme: *I'm So Tired*, *Sleep* and *My Brain*. Sam accompanied his own vocals on piano and was very ably assisted by a keyboard / guitar / bass / drums combo, with Reuben Penny on drums also adding in vocals from time to time. This effective piece took elements from rock and jazz but wasn't easy to pigeonhole with its complex rhythms.

Bye contributed repeated motifs on various instruments.

The competition concluded with an enjoyable performance by Rosie Tee and her ensemble. In two of her songs, *This is for you* and *Rush Rush Rush*, Rosie performed impressively on piano, glockenspiel and vocals. Did it matter that the two songs were unconnected?

After some deliberation, three



*2016 Composition Competition Finalists*

*My Heart is in the East* by Sebrina Lambert-Rose set an English translation of a twelfth century Hebrew poem and was modal with a Middle Eastern feel. Unfortunately what should have been a beautiful piece was marred by inaccurate harmonies from one of the two sopranos.

Next was *The People's Music of Palabeyo* by Dan Cippico. Soloist Maddy Robinson expressed the spare vocal line beautifully while Dan and fellow performer Seth

prizes donated by the Philip Bates Trust were awarded:

Prize A (adjudicated by the Philip Bates Trust) split between *Compost* and *Sleep*

Prize B (adjudicated by Birmingham Conservatoire) *Sleep*

Audience Prize *The People's Music of Palabeyo*

We look forward to hearing *Sleep* again in September at A Touch of Basil 2017.

*Sue Bates*

# Who did we help 2016-17?

**Aimee Presswood** – help with the cost of books and scores – soprano on post graduate course at Trinity Laban

**Danica Corns** – post graduate drama student – contribution towards summer course at the National Theatre

**George Murtagh** – Castle Bromwich 12-year-old – help with cost of a better quality trumpet

**Laura Bird** – Royal Academy of Music – contribution towards clarinet servicing, repair & sheet music

**Matthew Bates** – (no relation!) studying ballet at Royal Ballet Upper School – towards ballet shoes and dancewear

**Robert Tilson** – tenor on Royal Academy of Music post graduate course – help with cost of books & music

**Edward Robinson** – Royal Northern College – towards the cost of books, scores & language lessons

**Emily Noithip** – contribution towards the cost of cello lessons at Junior Guildhall

**Caithness Music** – grant towards purchase of a half-sized double



*The poster for Franklin College's production of The Tempest*

bass for Caithness Junior Orchestra

**Baseless Fabric Theatre** – workshops in connection with 'Drifting Dragons' opera project to teach young people how an opera is created

**Heart of England Co-operative Orchestra** – composition workshops for children

**Huttons Ambo Village Hall** – towards purchase of a digital piano to be used by the Glee Club in an area with few activities for young-



sters and poor public transport links

**Perfect Circle Theatre Company**  
– towards National Theatre Connections project

**Young People's Puppet Theatre**  
– coloured LED lamps for special effects – workshops with schools on making puppets, scenery and props then devising and performing puppet show

**Community Support Initiatives** – art therapy project for 17 – 25 year olds with mental health issues

**Franklin College** – help with cost of props and costumes for their production of 'The Tempest' which was also seen by pupils from other schools to help their understanding of the play for exam purposes

**Stomping Ground Festival / Stonecrabs Theatre Company**  
– cost of a sound designer for festival of 9 plays in 3 days showcasing 9 young directors

**The Lowry** – 'Get Involved' art project – cost of external assessment and moderation for 13 young people to achieve their Arts Award

## Samantha Guest-Guinnee

In 2014 the Philip Bates Trust gave Samantha Guest-Guinnee a grant towards dancewear and ballet shoes.

Recently Samantha's mother wrote to the Trust to say that she has now finished her training with a distinction and recently flew out to Miami to rehearse for 10 weeks before taking a job in the cast of *Grease* on the Royal Caribbean cruise ship The Harmony of The Seas.

It's a great start to her career and everyone at the Trust is very pleased to know that Samantha's grant was appreciated and that it helped a talented young performer to progress so well with her studies.



*Samantha Guest-Guinnee*



# One-Word Opera Wordsearch

Not many operas have one-word titles, but there are definitely at least ten - see if you can find them all!

X B J Z J A G E E V B A O T L  
K E P Z J T B J M N X H T D T  
G D N W A C J Z O O D B T G J  
D W B G H A I P L N J D E N Z  
K N W S H R L A A A A G L R B  
U C Q P H M O R S M B C O D P  
F Z I F I E L S R X H M G K Y  
Y V Q G D N B I O E D I I D V  
G F A L S T A F F T G N R U T  
G N U R E M M A D R E T T O G  
A Z J K M C N L Z U V L Q R U  
T L J X K U O F Z X X I L G L  
A X X X A C A M O M K I P O V  
W R C K L C X L B X Y L Q P C  
J M E D N Y N A K L A S U R J

Carmen  
Rigoletto  
Falstaff  
Lakme  
Manon

Otello  
Salome  
Rusalka  
Parsifal  
Götterdämmerung