

# Basil's News

2018

## 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)

## 2018 Message

Welcome to Basil's News for 2018. It's been another great year for the Trust, with lots of money raised and lots of support given to good causes and talented young people. We would particularly like to thank three very generous donors, including Advocati lawyers' choir.

This will be our first hybrid issue – distributed by email as well as post – and this is expected to save the Trust quite a lot of money in postage and printing expenses. If you are willing to receive your copy this way in the future please get in touch and let us know your email address.

We are also planning on reviewing our mailing list this year to bring it up to date, so if you know of any address changes we need to be aware of please drop us a line.

Lastly, we're pleased to announce that you can now support the Trust when you shop online - set us as your chosen charity on Amazon Smile, or register on [easyfundraising.org.uk](http://easyfundraising.org.uk) and we'll receive a donation every time you make a purchase.

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# A Touch of Basil 2017



*Ex Cathedra Girls' Academy who are also joining us in 2018 (see p10)*

Another year had passed and it was time to welcome together many different musicians at Bishop Vesey's Grammar School to celebrate the annual *A Touch of Basil* concert.

The concert opened with Philip's relative, Clare White, reciting a reflective poem called *The Swan*, followed by the returning voices of the Heart of England Singers who treated the audience to three contrasting pieces: *If Ye Love Me* by Tallis, Britten's arrangement of *Down by the Salley Gardens* and *In Paradisum* from Fauré's Requiem. Next up was the delightful piano duet *Berceuse* from his *Dolly Suite* performed by the young Hannah Morgan with her teacher Martin Bates, who together captured the beautiful melody of this

classic piece.

The next two pieces were from the host school: a mallet percussion ensemble gave us *Baby Elephant Walk* and *Under the Sea* before Nicholas Lee performed Massenet's charming *Meditation from Thaïs* on the Violin, demonstrating the skill which led to him being awarded the Bishop Vesey School's *Philip Bates Performance Prize 2016*.

Adding further contrast to this first half, father and daughter duo John and Sarah Saunders performed a delightful baroque trio sonata by Telemann accompanied by Martin on the harpsichord. The Ex Cathedra Academies then sang us towards the interval. All three of the different groups captured the



energy and joy of singing through careful arrangements and the superb leadership of all the tutors. A particular treat was seeing the young Beth and Lucy Bates-Gamble performing with the Children's Academy in three semi-improvised songs.

Opening the second half of the concert we heard the winning composition of the *Philip Bates Prize for Composers and Songwriters 2016*. Sam James performed his own evocative work *Sleep*, singing and playing the piano to an appreciative audience and backed



*Nicholas Lee*

by his fellow Conservatoire musicians. Following this new work we went right back to the first half of the 17th century to celebrate Monteverdi's 450<sup>th</sup> birth year as Sue Bates and Steve Davis joined with



*Katie Gilbert*

John and Sarah Saunders and Martin to perform the sensual duet *Pur Ti Miro* from *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* and the madrigal *Chiome d'Oro*. A real treat to hear such beautiful music with the period instruments so expertly played. Speaking of experts in the field, we were then treated to another new composition: this time the premier performance of Martin Bates' *A Day in Town*, composed for the returning very accomplished violinist Georgina Bloomfield. It was a delight to hear how Georgina worked around all the many different playing techniques Martin had put into this piece. Well done Georgina, it was superb!

Continuing the concert was the ad hoc group *Basil's Bunch*, who yet again came together on the





day to rehearse and perform three popular songs: *A Thousand Years* and two songs from the Carole King musical *Will You Still Love Me?* and *Beautiful*. Yet again, this group managed a light hearted and cheery rendition to delight the audience. The last solo item of the concert was the very pleasing soprano voice of Katie Gilbert, who performed two classical arias with musical poise and apparent ease as she clearly skipped around those enchanting high notes.

So to end the concert we came back to the home team, Martin's own Heart of England Singers, who paid tribute to Vera Lynn's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday year with the *White Cliffs of Dover* and the obligatory audience participation song *We'll Meet Again*.



*Hannah Morgan and Martin play "Dolly"*

Again, another year of such variety and talent, some new performers, some returning, some young, some old, all enjoying the pleasure of performing in memory of a fine young man. I think all involved worked incredibly hard to put on a fine evening's entertainment. Good job all!!

*Sarah Dudley*

## A Note From Sam



*Sam James with his new piano*

Thank you very much for having me at your concert last night, it was a real privilege to play alongside such talent and variety.

I don't know that I ever updated you on this front, but I suppose now is as good a time as ever - the money I received for winning the prize last year was spent buying the piano that I have been using for the last year, both for paid work and creative endeavours. So for that, I don't think I can thank you enough. All the best, *Sam James*

Note from Sue: Sam won first prize for 'Sleep' at the Philip Bates Prize for Composers and Songwriters in November 2016 and performed it again at our Touch of Basil concert in September 2017.



# Shropshire Youth Folk Ensemble

On April 21st 2018 the Shropshire Youth Folk Ensemble (SYFE) enjoyed a wonderful day with their rescheduled (due to snow) Percussion Workshop.



*SYFE drumming performance*

Fourteen SYFE members (aged 10-17) of all musical abilities put their main instruments aside and spent three hours enhancing their usual artistic skills by exploring rhythms and creative percussive styles on a variety of instruments. Playing the spoons was a great success – a skill which has to be acquired. Further percussion opportunities were taught using simple untuned percussion: tambourines, triangles, djembes, cajons and many other somewhat quirky instruments. A lot of new skills were learnt and a lot of fun was also had by all.

SYFE's workshop was led by Jo May – a professional multi per-

cussion instrumentalist who has played with major orchestras but who takes her love of the more folkie styled percussion (inspired by visits to West Africa) into many settings, with many ages and many events. Her engaging manner quickly drew all SYFE members in, with a great response.

The workshop was followed by invitation to friends and family to enjoy a 'Bring and Share' tea and then an informal concert. The concert had an audience of around fifty people plus the SYFE members and every SYFE member had family/friends present. This



*SYFE play the spoons*

was an opportunity for some performances and for SYFE to show



everyone their newly acquired skills along with all of the audience being able to join in.

We were delighted that Martin and Sue Bates from the Philip Bates Trust were able to join us in the evening.

The feedback from the workshop and evening event has been excellent from both SYFE members and from their parents. The directors of SYFE are currently working on some new repertoire for the summer rehearsals and ensuring that the new skills that were learnt will then be developed and included into SYFE's future performances. The concert was also an opportunity to show others what SYFE does and means that in May there will be two new members joining.

All in all we were all delighted with the event and the opportunity to stage the workshop due to the generosity of the Philip Bates Trust. Many thanks indeed to everyone involved in the Trust.

We are in the process of adding photos and videos to the SYFE website and will ensure that we do publicise the good work of the Philip Bates Trust.

*Ray & Bev Langton*  
*Directors of SYFE*

## **Alice Philippa Daisy Bates-Gamble**



*Alice Bates-Gamble*

In early February Rachel, Mark, Beth and Lucy were thrilled when baby Alice arrived safely to add to their family. Alice was due to be born on what would have been her uncle Philip's birthday, providing the ideal opportunity to remember him in naming her. The family would like to thank all well wishers.

Alice is a very happy little soul and doing very well. At six months old she is happily rolling around the lounge, trying to crawl and showing significant interest in trying to grab drinks!



# Ashleyan Opera Prize News



*Winners and Adjudicator, Ashleyan Opera Prize 2018*

The final of the Ashleyan Opera Prize for postgraduate singers is held in April or May each year at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. Those of you who knew my mother Margaret Asher, who donated the prize from funds remaining in the Ashleyan Opera account when the society closed, will be pleased to know that £1,000 was raised in her memory. This money has been added to the capital amount from which interest is paid out each year for the prize.

The 2018 competition final boasted six competitors, who were all female. Where did the men get to this year I wonder?

Katie Gilbert, who was Highly Commended in the 2017 competition, opened the evening with an ambitious programme. *Non Mi Dir* from *Don Giovanni* and *I Am the*

*Wife of Mao Tse-tung* from *Nixon in China* are both extremely demanding pieces. The John Adams piece is rather aggressive and contains repeated very high notes. Katie did well but was obviously running out of stamina towards the end.

Next to perform was Yin Yee Chan, who gave us Gluck, Mozart and Puccini. Although she has a promising voice, her diction needs more clarity.

We delighted in the beautiful quality of Elise Fairley's voice in Mozart's *Come Scoglio* and Rusalka's *Song to the Moon* by Dvořák: she gave a really lovely performance of the Dvořák.

Mezzo Esther Beard gave a commendably varied programme of arias by Tchaikovsky, Britten and





Humperdinck. I must admit that *Eugene Onegin* is one of my favourite operas, so it was great to hear Olga's aria.

Mier Huang was impressive again this year, her second appearance in the competition. She began her set with Liu's aria from Puccini's *Turandot* (its second performance of the evening), followed by Bellini's *Ah Non Credea* and ending with the effective *No Word From Tom* by Stravinsky from *The Rake's Progress*.

Last but not least was Samantha Oxborough, who gave a spirited rendition of *Svegliatevi Nel Cor*

from Handel's *Giulio Cesare* and well-characterised interpretations of *Voi che Sapete* from *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Give him this Orchid* from Britten's *Rape of Lucretia*. Hers was a suitably memorable performance to round off the competition.

The standard of singing across the whole evening was very high, as we have come to expect. Adjudicator Sarah Pring gave an outstanding adjudication, with apt and helpful comments for each of the competitors. She chose two of the singers to be joint winners: Samantha Oxborough and Elise Fairley.

*Sue Bates*

## 2017 Composition Competition

Birmingham Conservatoire was granted a 'Royal' accolade as the new building opened for business in September 2017. Our composition prize event on November 1st was one of those taking place in the early days while everyone was still getting used to the new facilities.

The Recital Hall space is very much in demand and we were unable to use it for rehearsal in the afternoon, instead using the concert hall then transferring to the Recital Hall for the evening concert. All the performers and composers were very flexible, but it did make things more difficult. Hope-

fully that problem will be avoided in 2018 as we're using a different space, The Lab, and it will be available for both rehearsal and concert on 6th November.

We had six competing pieces in the 2017 competition: four were by Royal Birmingham Conservatoire students and two by students from Leeds University, who travelled down with their performers. The Leeds pieces were both in a musical theatre style and contrasted well with those submitted by the Birmingham composers.

Hugo Bell's *7 Exercises in Style* set seven of the ninety-nine retellings of the same story in different styles





by Raymond Queneau. It was an interesting piece and mostly very effective, but I personally felt that some of the sections were not different enough from each other.

*Elizabeth's Struggle* was the first of the two Leeds compositions and I thought it had some moments reminiscent of *Les Misérables*. It was superbly sung by Mared Williams, who we've heard on several occasions gaining prizes in the Musical Theatre solo class at Lla-

was the second Leeds musical theatre piece. Scored for voice, piano, cello, flute and two violins, this was an effective and original piece in that genre.

Our last competitor of the evening was an old friend of the Philip Bates Prize, Daniel Blanco Albert. This was Dani's second time in the competition, having won a prize in 2015 and performed for us at our annual concert A Touch of Basil. His composition *When Close to a*



*Philip Bates Prize Winners 2017*

ngollen Eistedfodd. Since hearing her in Birmingham she has been awarded the prestigious International Voice of Musical Theatre 2018 at Llangollen.

*The Light of God* by Daniel Cuelar Trujillo was next, a setting of a prayer with string quartet supporting the soprano soloist.

Georgia Denham's *blue* was a beautifully written piece in two movements for voice, piano, viola and harp.

*The Face* by Maria Cortes-Monroy

*Heat Death...Entropy Comes Easy* made a fitting and impressive conclusion to the evening.

Three prizes donated by the Philip Bates Trust were awarded:

Philip Bates Trust adjudication: £300 split between Georgia Denham & Maria Cortes-Monroy

Royal Birmingham Conservatoire adjudication: £300 to Hugo Bell

Audience Prize: £200 to Daniel Blanco Albert

*Sue Bates*



## A Touch of Basil Back at Bishop Vesey's for 2018

We are back again on September 29th at Bishop Vesey's Grammar School, where Philip was a pupil. This will be our third year there for A Touch of Basil. We are always made very welcome with all the performers so close to the audience.

Regular friends will be returning including Basil's Bunch, Georgina Bloomfield and The Academies of Vocal Music from Ex Cathedra. Devon Brown will also be singing with Heart of England Singers the final scenes from the rock opera *King*, to remember in 2018 the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King's death. I composed the music for *King* and Keith Dennis wrote the words.

Sarah Saunders will join Stephen Davis and Sue Bates in a performance of the *Blake Songs* by Vaughan Williams. Singer-guitarist Jamie Brown from Tudor Grange School will join us for the first time. Prestigious prize winners from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire together with those from John Willmott and Bishop Vesey's will complete another stunning line-up of performances.

For tickets please call 0121 747 5705.

*Martin Bates*

## Beth's Sunflower Success



*Beth Bates-Gamble and her design*

Many of you may recall the Big Sleuth art trail in Birmingham last summer, where individually decorated bears were dotted around the city then auctioned off to raise money for Birmingham Children's Hospital. Dorridge Primary School held their own design competition, rewarding the winner from each class with a mini ceramic bear to decorate with their design. Beth won in her Year 1 class and her design featured a sunflower because the type of bear used for the mould was a Sun Bear. The Philip Bates Trust logo is also a sunflower, so it was appropriate to feature Beth's bear design on last year's Touch of Basil programme. Beth was thrilled to see her design on the programme cover and was amazed to see how many copies of her image could be seen around the hall at BVGS on the evening of the concert. She was subsequently given the Head Teacher's Award at school.

*Rachel Bates*



# Who did we help 2017-18?

In addition to the Philip Bates Prizes at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Bishop Vesey's Grammar School & John Wilmott School, which we give every year, we also helped:

Ludovico de Ventura – Birmingham 6th Former - towards cost of a professional quality trumpet prior to taking up place at RNCM

Tommy Hill – Royal Birmingham Conservatoire student – contribution towards cost of a professional quality oboe

Georgia-Mae Naan, 15 – Birmingham Royal Ballet Associate programme - dancewear and ballet shoes

Alice Pavlovicha – West Midlands school pupil – towards cost of flute lessons

Lara Rebekah Harvey – mezzo-soprano studying on Masters course at RNCM – money for vocal scores & music

Laurence Astill – Upton on Severn – RCM Masters – money for saxophone reeds

Nathan Duffy – 10-year-old Nottingham percussionist – contribution to cost of National Children's Orchestra course

Joshua Mountford – Shropshire 6th Former at Chetham's School of Music - due to take up place at RNCM – towards cost of a good quality cello

Skool of Street – Blackpool songwriting / music production course for youngsters in deprived area

Byker Community Association – Newcastle-upon-Tyne – money for recorders, music stands & sheet music to set up recorder group in a deprived area

Immediate Theatre, Hackney, London – money for Arts Qualification Participant Registration for disabled, deprived & disaffected youngsters on youth theatre programme

Northern Star Community Arts – Chelmsley Wood, Birmingham – towards costs of Dramaniacs, weekly youth drama group in a deprived area



Northgate School, Edgware Community Hospital, London – cost of Mandinka Roots drum circle & percussion workshop to encourage participation by youngsters with mental health issues

Shropshire Youth Folk Ensemble (SYFE) – cost of percussion workshop for young folk musicians (please see article)

The Avon Valley School and Performing Arts College, Rugby – contribution towards hiring music & costs of school musical theatre production *A Christmas Carol* by Alan Menken (please see article)

Music of Life Foundation – cost of a day's music workshop(s) for pupils at a special needs school in the West Midlands area

Portway Junior School, Derby – cost of full day's set of steel pan workshops with six Key Stage 2 classes

## ***Avon Valley Sings A Christmas Carol***



*Avon Valley School and Performing Arts College*

Philip Bates Trust helped to finance the Christmas production at Avon Valley School and Performing Arts College in Rugby; Sue and Martin went to watch during a particularly bad stretch of winter weather.

The performance of Alan Men-

ken's challenging musical *A Christmas Carol* was absolutely first rate, delivered at a level only usually seen in professional theatres. Congratulations to all and to Alison Davies their head teacher for realising how crucial these productions are for the greater success of the school.