



**The Amber Trust**  
Music for Blind Children

The Amber Trust brings music and fulfilment into the lives of blind and partially sighted children - a lifeline in a confusing world

# AmberNotes 2015

## Concert at Theatre Royal, Haymarket

On 23 November 2014, Amber supporters old and new came together to enjoy an afternoon of musical entertainment at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket for our main fundraising event of the year.

Hosted by the Radio 3 broadcaster and presenter of *In Tune*, Sean Rafferty, the 550 strong audience was treated to a wonderfully varied programme with performances from the known as well as the not so well known.

Derek Paravicini performed with his customary virtuosity and demonstrated an astonishing rapport with the three very talented co-members of the Derek Paravicini Quartet: jazz violinist Ben Holder, percussionist Ollie Howell and soprano Hannah Davey. They all dazzled us with their musicianship, their improvisatory skills and the sheer joy they had in performing together. It is not surprising that each of them is an award winner in their respective fields. The conductor John Lubbock has described their ensemble as '*one of the most beautifully integrated jazz quartets I have heard*'.

Less well known to Amber audiences were three very delightful stars of the future: first on was 7-year old Alex Pylypenko, who entertained us on the piano with Tchaikovsky's *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy*; Catherine Howells (cello) aged 12 and Sawa Ward (piano), aged 14, then gave an assured performance of Faure's *Elegy* for cello and piano; Sawa rounded off their set with the wonderful and challenging *Nocturne in D flat* by Chopin.

To the rest of the audience's surprise and delight, Kate Dimbleby joined Derek on stage to sing *Miss Otis Regrets* and, finally, Welsh singer Rhydian sang some beautiful songs before leading the whole cast in a rousing performance of *What a Wonderful World*.



## An Amber success story

**Congratulations to Poppy aged 9 who has been awarded the 'Most Improved' Trophy by FTM Dance.**

Poppy's teacher tells us she has made huge improvements and achieved tremendous things since starting singing lessons funded by The Amber Trust.

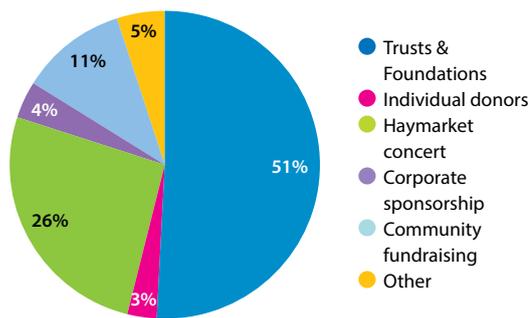
Poppy not only learned her favourite song 'Let It Go' to perform as her showcase in front of 500 people at Leicester's Curve Theatre, but she was able to recall the Makaton signs for some of the song and performed the text to aid the audience's understanding.



# A very successful year

Through the generosity of our friends, many Trusts and Foundations and the amazing supporters who have raised money through community events, Amber raised nearly £100,000 last year.

Annual Income 2014/15

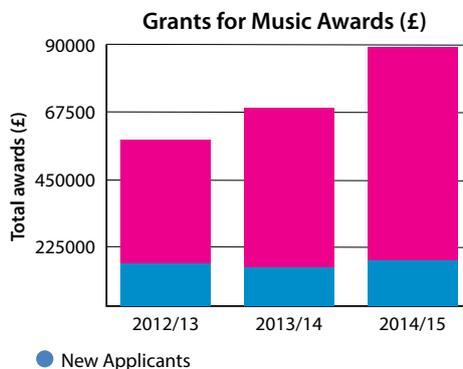
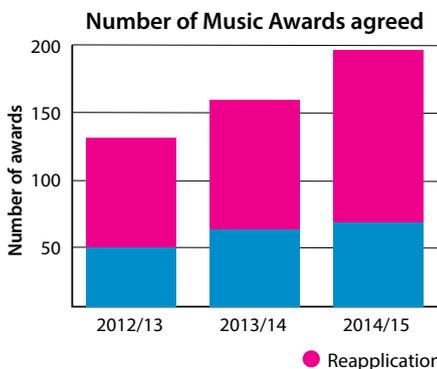


The need for Amber Music Awards continues to grow with an average 10% increase in grants being made each year over the past 5 years. Since its inception, Amber has supported 526 children, some for up to 8 years, and last year gave 195 awards to 176 children aged between 18 months and 18 years.

About a third of the awards were given to new applicants although they make up a smaller percentage of the total money given (2 charts) as the initial award is usually for a taster term of music lessons.

Amber supports children throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and is building strong relationships with specialist schools for sensory impairment including St Vincent's School, Liverpool; Linden Lodge School, London; WESC Foundation, Exeter; New College, Worcester; Royal Blind School, Edinburgh and the Mid-Ulster School.

Amber's Music Awards can help to enhance children's social and academic education through music and, in some case, prepare them for a career in music.



## In Touch

It was great publicity for Amber when Anna Foo, with her mother Laura and Prof Adam Ockelford, were interviewed on Radio 4's *In Touch* by Peter White.

Anna, who has received funding from Amber to play the flute since she was 9, gained Distinction in grade 8 flute and played in the National Children's Orchestra.



Among the issues raised were the challenges of obtaining music in braille, and music teachers' attitudes to taking on a pupil who can't see. Anna came across extremely well, and played the programme out with some Bach!

## A skilled all-rounder

11-year old Alana loves exploring, so to her music is an opportunity for adventure.

Even during her piano lessons she will experiment and improvise. *'She loves to play freely and create the sounds that give her such pleasure'*, says her teacher. And the examiner for her ABRSM Prep Test commented that Alana has *'fine levels of musical understanding'*.

Her exploration of all that music has to offer has led Alana from playing the piano at school Christmas festivities to playing drums and percussion,

composing her own music, and attending DJ workshops, which she really enjoys. She sings too. Alana looks forward to her piano lessons, funded by Amber since 2010 and loves her music for itself. She is rightly proud of her skills. Her parents say music also provides a happy outlet for the little frustrations in her daily life. She loves improvising and you can hear her in action on the Amber website.



# Pub Mega Quiz

The Amber Trust hosted its inaugural pub quiz night on 26th March 2015 and raised over £1,000!

The event was brilliantly organised by Helen and Nicole Leeder to raise funds for their London Marathon attempt. Around 80 people attended the event at the Sir Christopher Hatton pub near Chancery Lane in the City of London. Everyone at Amber is incredibly grateful to Helen and Nicole for everything they have done to raise both awareness and funds for our charity.



## DPQ CD

Amber Patron Derek Paravicini has recently formed his own jazz quartet, with amazing violinist Ben Holder (who can play as fast as Derek!), cool drummer Ollie Howells (who is also a bandleader and arranger in his own right), and Hannah Davey, who has the most beautiful voice and is acclaimed for both her classical and jazz performers.



The quartet made their first CD last autumn, which shows the four musicians off at their best, and has something for everyone, ranging from Bach to boogie. Sean Rafferty has featured the quartet a number of times on the *In Tune* programme on Radio 3.

The CD is available for purchase or download from Amazon.

## Making us proud

Samuel starred in Amber's 2012 newsletter.



Then he was living at home with his grandparents and playing his cornet in the Harwich Royal British Legion Apprentice Brass Band. Now he is in the 6th form at college, where his musical success has given him the confidence to socialise with his peers, sometimes at impromptu jamming sessions,

sometimes in the more formal context of the college brass ensemble and its jazz band too.

Amber has been funding Samuel's cornet lessons since 2009. Music is his life, even in the holidays. Last summer he played piano and cornet for the residents of a local old people's home and they want him back. Samuel's grandparents see this becoming a regular feature of his life. Samuel achieved a Distinction in the Grade 6 Associated Board exam and is studying for a BTEC in Music. He's started singing lessons. Music is his main occupation and joy in his life. Amber is proud of his achievements and his hopes for the future and enjoys showcasing his videos.

## On their way to a career in music

Congratulations to Rachel who took up a place in October 2014 at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama to study the piano and to Jamie who began reading Music at Liverpool John Moores University. What fantastic achievements. Good luck to them both. Rebecca performed in London in June 2015 at the Visually Impaired Musician's Conference and is seen here enjoying playing with Adam Ockelford during a break.



## Working together

Amber was delighted to purchase a Buffet E13 clarinet for Jack jointly with the Florence Nightingale Aid in Sickness Trust.

The FNAIST gives grants to those in need to provide aids which make a huge difference to people's lives. Amber looks forward to working with them in the future as this collaboration provides a great opportunity for more funds to be available to buy instruments and specialist technology for blind and partially sighted children.

# B DFA - Amber supporting children with Batten Disease

Amber currently supports a number of children with Batten disease – a life-limiting condition that causes blindness as well as neural degeneration – often through the provision of music therapy.



For these children, music is not only fun; it can also help them to share their thoughts and feelings with others, particularly when using words is difficult or impossible, and to understand what is happening and who is around in the absence of vision.

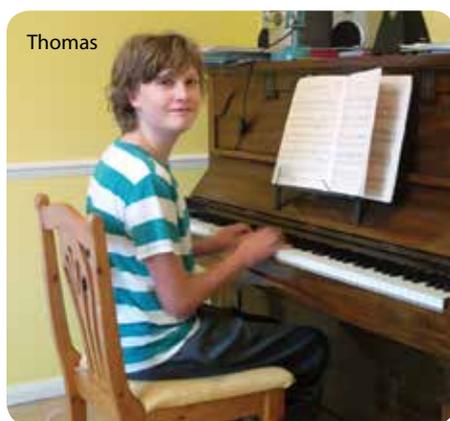
In partnership with the Batten Disease Family Association, Amber is setting up a new project at the University of

Roehampton which will explore for the first time the place of music in the lives of children with Batten disease. The thinking behind the project, which is based on previous, anecdotal reports, is that musical skills and interests may well continue after other abilities, such as speaking, are lost.

Beyond this, the plan is to create some new resources aimed specifically at children with neurodegenerative diseases such as Batten's, which can be used throughout their lives, and in particular to support communication and understanding in the later stages of the disease.

## New found confidence for a high achiever

Music ticks all the boxes for Thomas aged 15.



In the morning it helps him to wake up but when relaxation is the order of the day, Thomas can lose himself in his piano playing, making his own melodies, even meditating. Thanks to his newfound manual dexterity his handwriting has improved, and through the discipline of his musical studies Thomas has found himself better able

to concentrate on his other academic studies. So it is no surprise that Thomas has found a new confidence in his social and academic life.

Amber has been funding Thomas' piano lessons and he has achieved a high merit in his Grade 2 exam. His teacher says he is 'a pleasure to teach'. Thomas is learning how to play short notes on the piano to mimic the harpsichord in baroque music, but he enjoys playing music of any style and era.

For listening, one of his favourites is the theme tune from 'The Hobbit'. Thomas' mother says 'music has become part of his daily landscape, and it would be lovely for him to take his studies as far as he can, as they have enriched his life tremendously'.

## The Amber Trust at the London Marathon



We were fortunate to have Helen and Nicole Leeder and Jon Hyde running in support of The Amber Trust in the Virgin Money London Marathon 2015.

Between them they raised £5,000 which will make a massive difference to the number of young people we are able to support this year. What a fantastic achievement!

## King's College Junior School



On 6th October 2014 the Derek Paravicini Quartet gave a concert at Kings College Junior School in Wimbledon, to give the boys an experience of live jazz (and a number of them joined in!), and to raise money for Amber. The evening was very lively and great fun and, thanks to the generosity of the Kings' parents and staff who attended, a sum of £1,377 was donated to the Trust.

# London Nightrider 2015

Written by Louise Walport

**Despite some windy days earlier in the week, Saturday 6 June was a beautiful, clear evening for the London Nightrider. Great conditions but very cold later in the night!**

The team met for supper and consumed large quantities of lasagna and bread and butter pudding to keep us going through the night. We checked our bikes and gear, loaded them onto bike racks, and headed off to Crystal Palace. Driving up the hill to the start we became aware of what we were going to have to climb for a second time (only this time powered by our own steam...) at the end of the night.

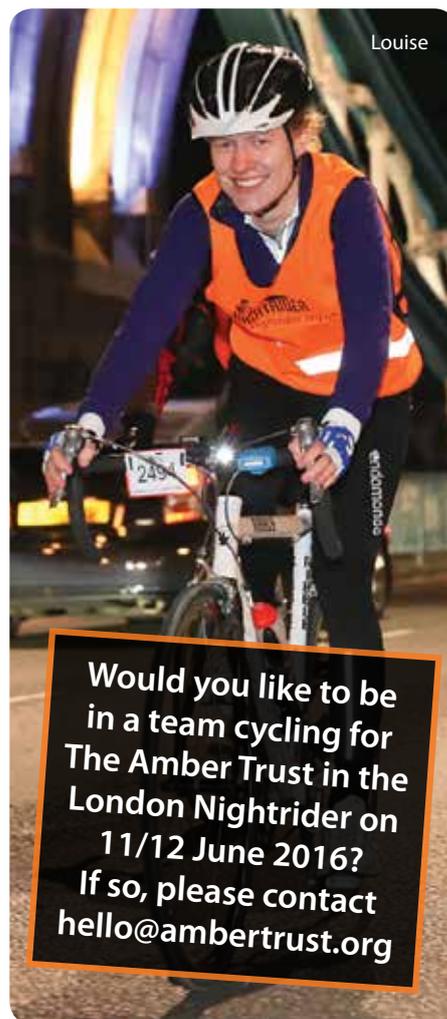
We set off in a rather chaotic mass of thousands of cyclists and followed the 100 km route anticlockwise round London. The traffic was much heavier than I had anticipated and was quite daunting at times - Piccadilly Circus was still absolutely packed at 1.15 am and there were lots of pedestrians as well as cars to avoid.

Later, the roads cleared a little and

there were wonderful sections cycling through the parks and looking down over London from Hampstead Heath. By the early hours of the morning, it was lovely being able to cycle past Big Ben and Westminster Abbey on fairly car-free roads. Whilst the route was mainly flat, the hill leading up to Alexandra Palace and the final one back to Crystal Palace were pretty tough, particularly right at the end of the night.

The traffic was too heavy for us to cycle together but, after cycling solo for the first leg, I met up with Sam and we cycled together for the rest of the night. This was really supportive, particularly as we became cold and fairly exhausted. We finished at about 5.45 am. It was great to sit in the early morning sun eating a bacon buttie before driving home to collapse into bed.

It was an incredible experience - probably not one I will repeat - but a wonderful way to see London. It was great to have such amazing support and raising more than £4,000 for The Amber Trust was fantastic. Thank you all - and do have a go next year.



Louise

**Would you like to be in a team cycling for The Amber Trust in the London Nightrider on 11/12 June 2016? If so, please contact [hello@ambertrust.org](mailto:hello@ambertrust.org)**

## Committed and enthusiastic

**Kiitan is just seven. He has oculocutaneous albinism.**



Kiitan

His normal academic work and play are inevitably tiring, but for Kiitan there is the added problem that he then struggles with his vision. His parents hope that music and piano playing will provide him with fun and relaxation,

and give him the added strength and confidence he will need in his life to come. After all, they point out, an experienced pianist can simply close his eyes as he plays... so even if Kiitan is tired, he can still relax with the music.

His piano lessons, funded by Amber, began last year, and his teacher says he is a committed and enthusiastic student, who enjoys both lessons and practice. He has begun to play pieces with understanding and feeling and has already taken his ABRSM Prep Test. You can hear Kiitan playing on The Amber Trust website.

Look out, all you professional pianists... Kiitan is on his way!

## Dart River swim



Helen

Having swum the 10k Dart River race in Devon and raised £500, Helen Sargent, who is a piano teacher, went on to hold a pupil concert to raise more money for Amber.

*'I chose to raise money for Amber when by chance I picked up their leaflet and it touched me how vital their achievements are. It was a pleasure to help this genius of a charity, where everyone is so appreciative of any effort to raise funds: I had a fantastic response from my sponsors.'*

# Website and Social Media

The amazing new Amber website was launched last autumn and has proved very popular. Significantly, the new software introduced improves accessibility for blind and partially sighted individuals.

On the website, we continue to showcase the remarkable skills of the talented young people we support through pictures, videos and audio clips. We also write about some of the innovative fundraising efforts from our wonderful supporters. Going forward, we plan to add resources, which will be freely available to help all blind and

partially sighted children benefit from the powers of music.

We are also looking to raise awareness for our charity through social media. In particular, we would encourage everyone to "follow" us on Twitter and "like" us on Facebook to keep up with the latest news from Amber.

## Fundraising Guide

Amber has launched a fundraising guide available to download from our website which is bursting with information.

The pack provides all the information and support you need to raise funds for Amber. The pack also includes plenty of fundraising ideas, so there will be no excuses for not doing something to help our important charity!

## Amber's Star

To help recognise and celebrate the remarkable children that we support, this year we launched a new awards scheme called "Amber's Star".

We award this title to someone who has achieved particular musical success, whether this be passing an exam, learning a new piece of music or performing at a concert. The award could go to someone who has raised funds for Amber by their musical enterprise, or to a recipient of an Amber Music Award who has achieved great progress towards a musical ambition.

Our first Amber's Star was Poppy who has tirelessly raised funds for Amber since she first heard Derek Paravicini play when she was 7 years old. Recently, she moved to Wells Cathedral School and is fundraising again with her friends and was sponsored to learn the cello gaining Distinction in Grade 1 in one term! Through Poppy's inspiration, £720 was raised at a local concert and local shops are collecting for Amber. Thank you Poppy.

Freya was our second Amber's Star. Despite losing her sight completely last year from Retinitis pigmentosa, she says the news of an Amber award, which ensured her singing training continued, lifted her spirits, provided a boost to her confidence and she passed her grade 8 singing. Success continues as Freya performed at the Sadler's Wells Theatre in London and she has now begun a year's pre-professional foundation course at BIRD College in London.

If you would like to be considered for an "Amber's Star" award then please contact us at [info@ambertrust.org](mailto:info@ambertrust.org) sending a short summary describing the musical success and, if possible, photographs or videos to support your entry – we would love to recognise each child who is crowned "Amber's Star" on our website.

## Music lover

11 year old Maddie loves music.



From the moment she gets up in the morning she whistles or sings her favourite tunes. She can run through 'Chicago' or 'Hairspray' before breakfast, before heading off unprompted to practise her violin, recorder or piano music. She has just gained a Distinction in her Grade 1 piano exam. She loves performing too. She joins any available workshop in the area and will happily sing or play for school concerts. Visiting grandparents know that tea will not be served until after the show.

Maddie's mother says she is a natural musician, who has outstripped the rest of the family in her knowledge and skill. Maddie's teacher says 'she is an absolute joy to teach'. Amber is proud to fund Maddie's violin lessons and we look forward to following her progress in the years to come.

## West London Strings

Many thanks to the West London Strings for raising £320 for Amber at their concert in Barnes, London in July 2014.



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The Amber Trust

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