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Other highlights of the concert included an ensemble performance of Leonard Cohen’s ‘Hallelujah’, while Amber patron Derek Paravicini astounded the audience with a series of off-the-cuff renditions of popular tunes from Bach’s ‘Air on a G String’ to Nathan Evans’ ‘Wellerman’ sea shanty.

You can view the concert via The Amber Trust’s YouTube Channel at www.youtube.com/watch?v=3H0QeP5yUn4

Queen Medley brings the house down at The Amber Trust’s 2021 Annual Concert

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Golden fundraiser Poppy honoured by Amber

Good things come to those who wait and so it proved for The Amber Trust’s golden fundraiser Poppy McGhee. The 16-year-old violinist has raised more than £10,000 for the charity in the past nine years after being inspired by a concert featuring patron Derek Paravicini at Chichester Cathedral.

Her efforts earned her a Rotary Club Young Citizen 2021 Award in May, having previously finished runner-up in Rotary’s Young Musician Competition National Final in 2018. Poppy was presented with her award at a virtual ceremony - hosted by BBC TV Presenter Ellie Crisell. It was not until Amber’s Annual Concert in September where Poppy performed with her friends and peers, that she was honoured by the charity.

Poppy also collected a Diana Award in May for her charity work for The Amber Trust. Established in memory of Diana, Princess of Wales, these awards are the highest accolade a young person can achieve for social action or humanitarian efforts.
**Mum pays tribute to Amber practitioner’s influence on her son**

Ebony Gilbert, the mother of an AmberPlus award recipient, has paid tribute to her son’s practitioner, Wendy, saying she wishes she could visit every week. Six-year-old George was born with Leber Congenital Amaurosis (LCA) - a rare genetic eye disorder meaning he has been blind since birth. He is also non-verbal and autistic.

George and his family receive termly visits from a specially trained practitioner thanks to the AmberPlus service and Ebony is in no doubt of their worth. ‘Music is the love of his life. It is everything to him. He feels so much through music and gets so much joy from it. The sessions we have with Wendy are something I look forward to as much as he does, because we are really limited when it comes to activities we can do with George.’

The book – illustrated by Bex Sutton - costs £6.99 and is available to buy at amazon.co.uk. For a full version of this story visit ambertrust.org/news-events/.

**What kind of music does your dog like? - Max’s ultimate ice breaker**

Max, who has cortical visual impairment and cerebral palsy after being starved of oxygen for 24 hours prior to his birth, has received funding from Amber for a range of guitar, piano and singing lessons over the last five years. He found a way to light up his lockdown walks with mum Ellen. She tells AmberNotes how he did it and why Amber plays a crucial role in her son’s continued development.

‘Max always has a song in his heart. He particularly enjoys musical theatre – especially Andrew Lloyd Webber productions, Mary Poppins and The Sound of Music - which has not only helped him communicate with others, but his speech has also become clearer and more distinct.’

Ebony, a poet, recently self-published a children’s book featuring a character loosely based on George and hopes it will help youngsters think positively about differences. Seeing with My Heart tells the story of Sid the snake, who feels like he doesn’t fit in because of how he looks. He learns about loving himself as he is after meeting a blind boy.

‘Throughout the early weeks of lockdown Max was desperate to interact with others. On one of our long walks, he thought of the most wonderful question to ask dog owners – “what kind of music does your dog like listening to?”’

‘We got some great responses. It is a lovely way to start a conversation. Our neighbour’s dog Pam likes jazz and disco, as her night walk collar has flashing lights like a disco ball.’

‘Max still retains a startle reflex and often jumps out of his skin at sudden noises. His music helps him cope with all of life’s uncertainties and difficulties - and he does not leave home without his headphones or MP3 on car journeys.’

‘Max has really missed his college choir sessions, but we sing along with him. The Amber Trust award enabled him to enjoy singing lessons just before lockdown. His love of music gives immense pleasure to all who work with him. We are grateful for the support from The Amber Trust and the music teachers, who have come through Devon Music.’

For more on how the Amber Trust helps Max, visit the news section at ambertrust.org.

**Fundraising shorts**

- Amber’s patron Derek Paravicini and his jazz quartet teamed up with Breast Cancer Haven to play a concert at the Holy Trinity Church in Sloane Square, London in September and raised more than £1,550 for Amber.

- Hospitality supply chain software firm Caterlyst came up trumps in support of The Amber Trust’s Annual Concert in September, as the company’s donation enabled the event to be broadcast live online by Parky TV. The broadcast has attracted close to 2,000 views to date.

- Long-standing Amber Trust supporters Maggie and Peter Chambers braved the miserable August Bank Holiday weather in North London to raise a fantastic £250 via a car boot sale.
‘I want to do it again,’ says Amber dare devil skydiver Hannah

Hannah Morgan admitted she may have developed a taste for the high life after skydiving in aid of The Amber Trust in October. She plummeted 15,000ft – including a one-minute freefall – at the North London Skydiving Centre in Cambridgeshire on 23 October to raise more than £900. One young member of the Morgan family is a beneficiary of the Little Amber programme, and Hannah was only too pleased to do her bit.

‘It was amazing. I just want to do it again. It is literally the best thing I’ve ever done. Just incredible,’ said Hannah. ‘I’ve raised money for charity before but wanted to do something for Amber as it is such a great cause. My family were really pleased.’

‘I thought I’d be a lot more nervous, but because I was doing it with a friend, we were just cracking jokes the whole time and it put everyone at ease. It was all a bit of a blur at the start really, but the view from above the clouds was amazing. We will definitely do something like that again, but it is going to be very hard to top that.’

To watch a video of Hannah’s one minute freefall, visit The Amber Trust’s YouTube channel.

The Captain Tom 100 Challenge – Do it Amber’s way!

Lockdown in the early part of the year and persistent social distancing measures curtailed much of our live fundraising activity. In May, as the country came back to life, our supporters joined thousands around the world in the Captain Tom 100 Challenge, Doing it Amber’s Way. Families and friends performed, played, and practised music around the number 100 and helped raise £4,890.

Thank you to everyone who took part, especially Donal Mac Bradaigh and his family who raised over £1,500 and Poppy McGhee who, with her friends, practised for 100 hours raising £900!

Music in Mind

The Amber Trust teamed up with the Wimbledon International Music Festival to present Music in Mind, a day’s symposium at King’s College School, Wimbledon looking at the relationship between neurodiversity and music.

The event was organised by Amber’s founder and trustee Professor Adam Ockelford and included seminars on music and autism, music and deafness and music and blindness. Amber’s patron Derek Paravicini joined Adam performing in the morning session on autism. Other highlights included a percussion demonstration from Dame Evelyn Glennie and a chat with celebrated composer Michael Berkeley which followed Amber’s Music Services Manager Dr Hannah Marsden discussing her work on music and deafness in early childhood.

In the final session, Chief Executive Dr Angela Voyajolu delivered a presentation on the research that led to Amber’s Little Amber service with beneficiaries Lilly Kurata, Ivan Rodriguez Deb and Ashleigh Turley, all holders of Julia and Hans Rausing Scholarships, closing the conference with a stunning, short concert.
Andy Shea ran the Virtual London Marathon in October to give something back to the charity that’s given so much to his daughter Poppy. Andy clocked five hours and 21 seconds for the 26.2-mile route he planned around the streets near his home in Caterham-on-the-Hill.

Poppy, who is two, is one of only 250 people worldwide known to have the genetic condition Frazer syndrome, which has left her with one eye fused shut and the other only able to distinguish between light and dark.

‘Poppy absolutely loves music. She’s always playing games with music. You can play her a short tune and she’ll play it back to you,’ said Andy, who raised £1,409.73 for The Amber Trust. ‘Amber has provided all sorts of things for her, and I thought I’d run the marathon to try and give something back.’

Andy’s efforts helped a trio of marathon runners raise more than £3,000 for The Amber Trust in the space of a week. Dan Hough raised £808.50 after completing the Berlin Marathon in September, while Chris Guy - husband to AmberPlus practitioner Emily - raised £740.00 also through running the Virtual London Marathon.

Well done, all!!!

Achievements to celebrate

**Ronan**, aged eight, celebrated when his composition *Cacophonous Mind* scooped third prize in the Digital Media category of the Guildhall Young Artists Competition in July. More than 1,600 students across the Guildhall’s network of Saturday music schools for young artists were invited to submit a piece of music in four distinct categories. ‘It sounds like my mind because I hear music everywhere, all the time,’ said Ronan of his music. Congratulations, Ronan!

**Eleanor**, one of the singers in September’s Amber Trust Annual Concert, has been named as one of four children sharing the part of Tiny Tim in *A Christmas Carol* at London’s Old Vic Theatre. It is the third year running she has played the role. Well done, Eleanor.

Congratulations to **Ivan** on gaining a Distinction in his ARSM Piano Diploma and winning several prizes at the Watford Music Festival this year. Ivan is multitalented as he is also the National Mens’ Visually Impaired Tennis Champion. He is ranked No 1 in Great Britain and is the youngest member of the LTA’s Great Britain squad.