



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 2022

Amber's 2022 Annual Concert was a big success!

The Amber Trust Annual Concert in May was a wonderful afternoon showcasing the extraordinary talents of our young musicians and supporters.

Derek Paravicini joined us for some exceptional performances. Fundraising champion, Dan, played a spectacular piece of Rachmaninoff, and we were treated to a double violin concerto from golden fundraiser Poppy McGhee and Amber's Lilly K.



Nikhil

'I was ecstatic when I was chosen to play this year,' Nikhil said. 'I counted down the days to the concert.' Nikhil played the ukulele in a lively performance of

I'm Yours with some of the other young musicians.



Amber Trust Concert 2022

'I was so happy to meet Derek, who is my favourite. I was so excited to perform and felt on top of the world.' Nikhil is already practising hard so that he can join Derek and the other young people again next year.

The concert ended with a beautiful rendition of *What a Wonderful World*, performed by all the children who took part. We are delighted to say that the concert raised £2,254 for The Amber Trust. We are incredibly grateful to Parky TV for live streaming the event, and to St Paul's School for allowing us to use The Wathen Hall as our venue.

It was Nikhil's first time playing in our Annual Concert. He felt 'inspired' when he attended the 2021 concert as a member of the audience.

We also want to thank the young musicians and their families for taking part and making the concert such a spectacular event.

Ivy is enjoying her AmberPlus sessions with Emily

7-year-old Ivy was born with a brain condition called polymicrogyria. Ivy has significant disabilities, is vision impaired, and has been profoundly deaf since birth. When Ivy was 2, her life changed when she received cochlear implants.



Ivy & Emily

This unlocking of sound introduced Ivy to music. 'Ivy loves every type of music there is,' says Yasmine, Ivy's mother. 'After

struggling with being stuck indoors during Covid, I reached out for some music lessons. This is where we heard about The Amber Trust and the work they do with children like Ivy. We look forward to continuing her journey and watching her grow her love of music with The Amber Trust.'

As part of our AmberPlus scheme, we support Ivy by

providing a starter set of percussion instruments and regular visits from music practitioner, Emily. 'Ivy's face lights up when she sees Emily,' Yasmine observes. 'It has been truly amazing to see how much joy the sessions bring to her life.'

Emily says it is a pleasure to work with Ivy. 'Ivy is one of those children who hears a beat, a song, or an instrument and instantly joins in; she is innately musical and thrives on music. Amber gives Ivy the opportunity to develop her musicality further.'

Music is also helping Ivy to communicate. 'Music is Ivy's voice,' says Emily. 'She utilises her musicality to communicate with those around her and we develop these techniques in Ivy's sessions. Ivy is a great musician who is happy to be heard.'

We are so pleased Ivy is enjoying her musical journey with Emily!

Amber has a new Chair



After an incredible eight years at the helm, Lady Julia Walport stepped down as our Chair in March. We are immensely grateful to Julia for her leadership and vision, during which the charity has grown exponentially, almost tripling in size. Thank you, Julia, for your dedication and service!

We are delighted that Professor Adam Ockelford has taken over as Amber's Chair. Adam founded The Amber Trust in 1994. In his role as Professor of Music at the University of Roehampton, he researches the effects of vision impairment on children's musical engagement and development, with many of his findings influencing Amber's resources and approach.

Remembering Tom and his love of music



The following reflection on Tom's life was written by Tom's mother, Sam.

"Music was Tom's passion and his music sessions allowed him to express himself and take control, something his body never really allowed him to do in any other way in his daily life.

with a view to helping everyone around Tom - family, friends and carers - to engage with him through music on a daily basis. Tom had a fantastic sense of musicality and we discovered how good he was at singing (he loved using the echo on his microphone!), but how he could also use his feet to play the guitar, chimes and keyboard. We hired a private music therapist who was fantastic. She came to the house every week for 3 years where she and Tom became very close friends. They enjoyed a really positive time. Even when Tom was having tricky days, he would use all the energy he could muster to put 110% into his favourite time of day.

When Tom passed away it was really important to his family and friends that we did something to remember him and his love of music. This is why we decided to do our marathon walk in aid of The Amber Trust. Tom would love the fact that we were raising money to give other children the same opportunity he had - to discover the amazing power of music!"

Tom was registered blind and due to having very complex physical and medical needs, he was life-limited. We were looking for some music therapy to give Tom the opportunity to explore his love for music. We wanted it to be at home where he felt safe and comfortable so he would get the most out of his session. When we applied to The Amber Trust, Tom started on the AmberPlus scheme, which focuses more on the whole family

Tom's fundraiser has raised £5,431 in aid of The Amber Trust. You can continue to donate in memory of Tom Tom at gofundme.com/f/sk8up-tom-tom

Achievements to Celebrate!

Ivan

Congratulations to Ivan, who was accepted into the Junior Academy of the Royal Academy of Music in London. Ivan has previously studied at the Centre for Young Musicians, a division of the Guildhall School of Music. We wish Ivan all the luck going forward!

Ethan

Amber alumni Ethan participated as a contestant in the BBC Young Musician 2022 competition. He impressed the judges with some spellbinding performances and won the Keyboard Finals! It was an exciting competition, and we are incredibly proud of Ethan and his achievement.

Lydia

Lydia passed her Grade 3 Piano exam in July with Merit and received a Grade 8 in her Music GCSE. In addition, Lydia recorded her Grade 7 exam in Classical Singing and received a Distinction! Lydia has also started a Music Performance BTECH - all this whilst also starting A Levels in Psychology and English Literature!

Amber attended the Batten Disease Family Association Conference



Steve and the children

It was a privilege for The Amber Trust to take part in the BDFA Family Conference in September, putting on a specialist music session run by Amber music practitioner Steve Harper.

Steve said of the day, 'It was a very warm, supportive

environment with the youngsters supported by a team of carers, as their parents participated in discussions and activities in another room.'

12 children of a range of ages and abilities attended the session with 'bags of enthusiasm and excitement.' They engaged with a variety of songs and enjoyed sensory-based

activities, such as exploring the saxophone and floor drums, amongst other instruments.

Steve was able to have one-to-one time with each child and ended the session with a finishing song and a chat about the session's best moments.

When the parents came to collect their children, Steve said, 'it was lovely to touch base with them' and commented that he himself also gained valuable insights from the day.

With Music in Mind is an Amber service providing musical support for children with vision impairment and neurodegenerative disease. Children on the scheme will receive activity cards, a resource pack, items to record memories, and sessions with a specially trained music practitioner.

Alan is thriving on our Little Amber scheme

4-year-old Alan was born with cataracts blocking the lenses in his eyes. He had the lenses removed at 14 weeks old and now wears strong glasses that act

as prosthetic lenses. Alan's parents, Finn and Sally, say that he is incredibly musical and 'sometimes spends the whole day singing different bits of songs!'

Alan has been on the Little Amber scheme since he was 8 months old, working with music practitioner Gennie Joy for the last 4 years. Gennie says, 'My visits through the Little Amber scheme have allowed me to see Alan progress from



Alan

exploring music in a sensory way, through to interacting with patterns and motifs, and now to singing whole songs with huge enjoyment. It's been a pleasure to work with Alan and his family!'

Alan's parents are delighted with Gennie's visits. 'Gennie has been wonderful. She comes to see Alan every 3 months and finds new ways to engage with him each time. Access to the instruments and activity cards [provided by the Little Amber scheme] has been a real blessing.'

Alan's sessions are also improving his development in other areas. 'His attention span has grown so much through Gennie's visits,' say his parents. 'It's remarkable. Thank you, Amber Trust, for coming on this journey with us.'

We are thrilled that Alan is getting so much from his Little Amber sessions!

A beautiful concert in aid of Amber

Maggie and Peter Chambers organised a concert in aid of The Amber Trust in May. The concert was held at Anson Primary School and featured the talents of Derek Paravicini, Poppy McGhee, Shona Beecham, and the Anson School Choir. Ivan and Chapman, who are both supported by Amber, also performed in the event.

Maggie said, 'The school hall was packed. Everyone enjoyed the wonderful and varied music'. After the concert, most of the attendees stayed for drinks and refreshments.

Brent Council's 'Love Where You Live' department donated £300 to help pay for the concert's expenses. We are exceedingly grateful to Maggie and Peter for arranging the concert, which raised a total of £2,030 for The Amber Trust.



Derek and Adam

An 'Amber Amble' in South Wales



After the Covid lockdowns hampered the first attempt in 2020, Chris Lovell arranged a walk from Hay-on-Wye to the banks of the River Severn in September. 'When I reached the age of 70, I intended to celebrate by walking the lower third of the Offa's Dyke path

with some musical friends, singing in some of the delightful churches en route to raise funds in aid of The Amber Trust,' said Chris. 'We sang some mediaeval pieces among the picturesque ruins of Llanthony Priory to an appreciative audience of sparrows, who listened attentively and later showed us how to sing properly. We enjoyed rehearsing in the beautiful white church of Llangattock Lingoed and sang Evensong in the impressive church at Llantilio Crossenny.' Chris and his friends sang in other spectacular locations along the route.

Chris is an amateur musician who is 'impressed and humbled' by the achievements of the Amber children. 'The Amber Trust plays a very important role in supporting many children with vision impairment with impressive results.'

'I am most grateful to all who supported me by walking, singing or donating (and in many cases all three!).' 'We are incredibly appreciative of Chris's support, which raised an impressive £360 for Amber.

The Amber team has grown

We welcomed two new members to the Amber team this year, taking our total number of employees up to six:

- **Angela Voyajolu** - CEO
- **Hannah Marsden** – Music Services Manager
- **Elissa Turay** – Music Awards Manager
- **Ying Lin** – Finance Officer
- **Dom Millard** – Music Administrator
- **Hannah Cykowski** – Communications and Events Officer

Dominic and Hannah C joined The Amber Trust in September.

We are also delighted to welcome Victoria Oruwari as a new Trustee. Victoria is an acclaimed soprano who performs at concert venues in and out of the UK. She has over 10 years experience teaching singing, directing choirs, and singing in workshops in schools. Victoria is also a UKCP accredited humanistic psychotherapist.

We're thrilled to expand our team and see the charity grow!



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facebook.com/theambertrust

How to support Amber

There are multiple ways you can help us support the thousands of blind and partially sighted children in the UK in their musical endeavours.

- **Fundraising:** If you are interested in fundraising in aid of The Amber Trust, you can find our fundraising guide online, complete with all the resources needed to make your event a success.
- **easyfundraising:** Did you know you can support us for free just by shopping online? We are registered with easyfundraising, who will donate to Amber whenever you shop at one of their 7,000 brands. You just need to register your details with easyfundraising and use them whenever you shop online.

- **Amazon Smile:** You can also support us through Amazon Smile by shopping at smile.amazon.co.uk and selecting The Amber Trust as your nominated charity. Amazon will donate 0.5% of your shop directly to Amber, at no extra cost to yourself!

The Amber Trust considers applications for its Amber Music Awards three times a year. The next deadline for applications is 28 February 2023, with further opportunities in June and November. For full details on how to apply visit [ambertrust.org/amber-music-awards](https://www.ambertrust.org/amber-music-awards).



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