



The AMBER Trust brings music, hope and fulfilment into the lives of blind and partially sighted children, many of whom have additional disabilities - a lifeline in a confusing world

2012



"I was born with music inside me. Music was one of my parts. Like my ribs, my heart"
Ray Charles

Rising star

Blindness from an early age is a common factor in the development of exceptional musical ability.

Music really can help to transform the life of a blind or partially sighted child.



11-year-old Anna

"Every now and then, what you thought was a myth turns out to be true - and so it was with my research with blind children. They really **are** much more likely to be musical than those with normal vision. They are around 4,000 times more likely to have 'perfect pitch', for example: an exceptionally good musical ear that will really help them when they come to learn an instrument or take up singing. The most important thing for AMBER, though, is to support **all** children with sight loss, including those with learning difficulties, whatever the level of a child's musical abilities and interests. For all of them, music is likely to be particularly important as a means of communication, of socialising with others, of expressing emotion, and, most importantly, of having fun!"

Professor Adam Ockelford – Founder of The AMBER Trust

This is certainly true of one of AMBER's rising stars, 11-year-old flautist Anna, who was born blind. Anna – the first blind child ever to join the National Children's Orchestra – says of her achievement:

"Being part of an orchestra is one of the best experiences that I have ever had. Playing with so many amazing musicians has helped me to become a better flute player. When I play with others in an orchestra, I forget everything that has happened in the past, and also what may happen in the future. All that I focus on is what I am doing now, living an experience in my life, which I wish could go on forever."

AMBER's new President

HRH The Duchess of Cornwall is to become our new President. We are honoured and delighted by her commitment to our work in helping to transform the lives of blind and partially sighted children through music. There are many new challenges ahead and The Duchess' support of our charity is a tremendous boost, which will help to raise AMBER's profile and attract new supporters. Ultimately, it will enable us to help more visually impaired children reach their full potential.



A message from HRH:

"I am delighted to be the first President of The AMBER Trust. I have followed the progress of their outstanding work with blind children for many years and I very much hope that my involvement will enable the charity and the children it supports to fulfil their ambitions in the coming years."

Brilliant at Braille



Alexia

Alexia, who has been blind since she was two due to a brain tumour, uses Braille for reading, writing and music.

An extraordinarily gifted child, she is also fluent in four languages, including Chinese, plays the piano and recorder and sings in three different choirs.

After two years of learning Braille music, helped by AMBER, 11-year-old Alexia has won several Braille Music Awards.

She says: *"Music is the light that guides many people on the journey of life, blind people in particular, because hearing is one of our greatest assets. Braille music is the medium we use to interpret the language of music."*

Ronnie's Radio 4 Appeal

Through Ronnie Corbett's inspiring BBC Radio 4 Appeal on behalf of AMBER, the charity has received many generous donations.

These will be used to fund our Music Awards, bringing music into the lives of blind and partially sighted children all over the UK.

You can listen to Ronnie's Appeal on BBC iplayer Radio 4 Appeal – The AMBER Trust 27th March.

We are delighted that Ronnie has been honoured by Her Majesty the Queen with a much-deserved CBE for his services to entertainment and charity.



Frank

Singing his way to success

Using his baritone voice, partially-sighted Frank, who also suffers from hydrocephalus, has sung his way into the National Youth Choir of Great Britain. Well done Frank!



This prestigious choir recently performed at the BBC Proms in the Albert Hall, London, with the celebrated Simon Bolivar Orchestra. The choir rehearsed for three days prior to the concert and only came together with the orchestra on the day itself, a tough and challenging task but one that Frank relished.

As part of his training with the choir, Frank attends two residential courses a year, funded by AMBER, which he admits are gruelling but terrific fun and ultimately very rewarding.

He recently wrote: *"This sort of opportunity would not be open to me were it not for The AMBER Trust and the great kindness they have shown me."*



Three ages of me

80-year-old David Forest was so moved by Ronnie's Appeal that he donated the proceeds of his show "Three Ages of Me" to AMBER.

His performance included stories and songs about three stages of his life – his 20s, 50s and his 80s. Our thanks to David for his talent and time.

Visit David's website on www.davidforest.info

Life at Linden Lodge



3-year-old Jai

Three-year old Jai, who is partially sighted and has severe developmental delay, is going from strength to strength at Linden Lodge School in Wandsworth.

Jai's mother says: "I am amazed at the enthusiasm and care he receives from all the staff. He is making great progress especially with his use of his eyes, which I really believe started with his music therapy sessions from AMBER. Jai doesn't

miss a thing these days and the best part of his development now is he finds my face and smiles at me! Fantastic!"

Linden Lodge has been helping blind and partially sighted children, including those with additional disabilities, for over 100 years. Among its famous musical alumni are the blind jazz pianist, Sir George Shearing, who died in 2011, and Derek Paravicini, who was a student in the 1980s and 1990s.

www.lindenlodge.wandsworth.sch.uk

Isobel moves down under...

We are very sorry to say goodbye to Isobel Michael, who has moved to Melbourne, Australia.

For the past five years, Isobel has played an essential part in helping AMBER with fundraising and in working with the children and families we support.

... and Tracy takes over

We are delighted to welcome Tracy Tait in her place.

Tracy, an experienced fundraiser, has worked in the charity sector for eight years, mainly for children's health-related causes. Before this she worked in merchant banking and education.

Alistair's accordion

Partially-sighted Alistair does not see the world in 3D – to him, everything appears flat.

But this hasn't stopped him from developing his extraordinary talent at playing the accordion. This tenacious 12-year-old has gained three 1st places in the West of Scotland Accordion Championships and 1st place in the UK championships.

To enable him to progress to more challenging music, Alistair has been working tirelessly to raise enough money to buy a new accordion, which costs over £8,000. With help from AMBER and a grant from the Awards for Young Musicians, as well as the £1,300

Alistair raised himself by playing for tourists at Loch Lomond, he is now the proud owner of a brand new adult top-of-the-range accordion.



Alistair

Could you be an AMBER Angel?

AMBER Angels donate to AMBER regularly each month.



A regular gift allows AMBER to plan for the future, ensuring that we can continue to make a difference to the lives of more children through music. We promise that all donations will be used to fund music lessons, music therapy sessions, instruments, software and concert tickets.

Become an AMBER Angel today and you will be helping children like Verity (below), whose music therapy sessions are not only transforming her life but that of her family as well.



Verity

To make a regular donation, please fill out the AMBER Angels Regular Giving Form in the Donate section of our website and send it back to us.

www.ambertrust.org

Derek does it again... and again

South Bank concert



Derek Paravicini

Derek Paravicini, the blind musical prodigy around whom AMBER was first created, continues to promote the charity with his unique talent.

He stunned the music world when he performed his own piano concerto at South Bank. The concerto, which was inspired by Derek's favourite composer, George Gershwin, was written especially for him by Matthew King and took a year to compose.

Derek made history on the night, as it is the first time a concerto has been written for someone with learning difficulties. He had to memorise the entire piece by ear (over 25,000 notes!) – not just his part but that of every other instrument as well – so that he knew when to play.

AMBER is incredibly proud of Derek's magnificent achievement.

Shearing magic

Derek also joined four other gifted musicians to recreate George Shearing's music at an uplifting concert held at the Watermill Jazz Club in Dorking.

We are very grateful to Anne Odell, founder of the Club, who very kindly donated the proceeds of the concert to AMBER.



Spring talent concert



Derek as a child

Miller Philanthropy in partnership with the Zetland Foundation hosted an evening of music at Cadogan Hall, Chelsea, where Derek again performed.

AMBER was fortunate to be one of the charities to benefit from this inspirational event, which raised several thousand pounds for the charity.

AMBER rocks at Ellesmere

AMBER has funded five visually impaired children to join the Rock School workshops at Ellesmere College.

The school, which has around 250 students with a variety of special needs, set up the project to enable students with an interest or a talent for music to enhance their skills.



The rockers joined other children from nearby specialist schools to play a hugely successful gig at a top music venue in Leicester.

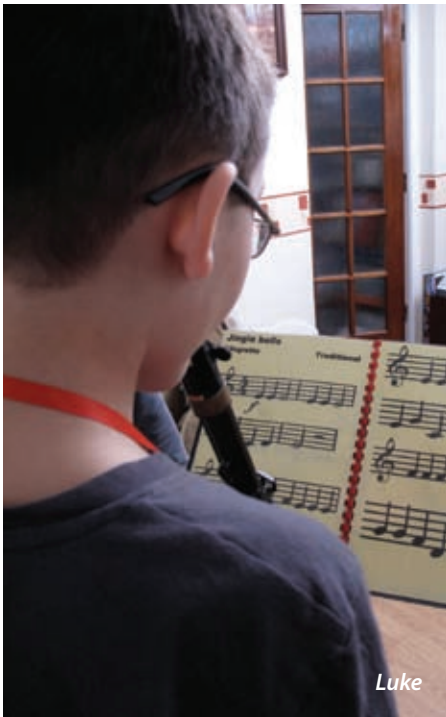


Sounds of Intent

AMBER continues to support the Sounds of Intent project, which helps children and young people, including those with learning difficulties and autism, to engage with music.

You can find out more about this wonderful project at www.soundsofintent.org

Breaking down barriers



Luke

AMBER knows that children with sight loss, including those with additional disabilities, are less likely than sighted children to find a music teacher to take them on.

This is down to people's misunderstanding of what it means to be blind or partially sighted, and prejudice as to what visually impaired children can achieve. Many parents find themselves fighting at every turn to get the same opportunities for their children as fully-sighted youngsters.

Emmanuelle, mother of partially-sighted Luke and Scott, says: *"Visually impaired kids are never going to have an easy life. They are always going to have a lot of things to overcome, a lot of discrimination, a lot of things they cannot take part in. I am always the bad guy because I am always fighting for my children's rights. So when you find something nice like AMBER, it makes such a big difference to all our lives."*

Laura, mother of Anna, who is blind, adds:

"It has not been easy at all. Socially it's very difficult. Anna's found it very hard. Little children use their facial expressions to communicate and Anna doesn't get a lot of that. She misinterprets situations and doesn't know what is going on. It's been really tough. It's heart-breaking. I've isolated myself from other mothers at school because you want them to be responsible, to explain to their children, but nobody seems to get it."

Through its support for research – and through the examples of the children and young people it supports – AMBER is helping to fight prejudice like this.



Just one cornet

Although 14-year-old Samuel was born blind, has autism and learning difficulties, he can read and write Braille, and is studying the jazz syllabus in both cornet and piano.

With funding from AMBER, the unwavering support of his grandparents (both of Samuel's parents have died) and the help of an excellent teacher, this budding musician has passed his Grade 5 cornet with merit, and now plays with Harwich Royal British Legion Apprentice Brass Band.

Despite finding social situations challenging, joining the band has given Samuel an outlet to mix and work with other children.



14-year-old Samuel

Perfect Patrons

We are thrilled to announce that Ronnie Corbett CBE has kindly agreed to become one of AMBER's patrons.



Ronnie will join Jools Holland, our first patron, together with Eleanor, Lady Shearing, wife of the late and great blind jazz pianist, Sir George.



Sir George and Eleanor, Lady Shearing

Derek Paravicini and his father Nic, who has always been a great support to the charity, are also to become much-valued patrons.

AMBER's new DVD

Our fantastic new DVD truly captures the huge impact music has on the children we support. It gives a great insight into how music is changing their lives, as well as their families, who are often forgotten.

We would like to thank Miller Philanthropy for sponsoring this, and for providing the creative direction for our new website and newsletter. Their help and support is invaluable to us.

If you would like a copy of the DVD please write to:
Anne Civardi 47 Waterford Road London SW6 2DT



Future events

We are organising several events for the coming year, which will include a **Jazz concert** and an **AMBER cricket match**.

Derek Paravicini and friends will be playing at the following events in aid of AMBER, where everyone is welcome.

May 16th at 7.45pm
The Hawth, Crawley

June 12th at 7.45pm
The Brook Theatre, Chatham

July 1st at 8.00pm
The Ship Theatre, Sevenoaks – in 'Shearing Magic' (a reprise of last October's sell out concert at the Watermill Club in Dorking).

Getting involved



Tiggy Scoones

AMBER has four new members of their fundraising committee, whose involvement is a great bonus to the charity.

Katie Johnson currently works in the corporate communications team of an international health group and William Walker-Arnott advises private clients, charities and trusts on financial investments. Tiggy Scoones, a lawyer, has a keen interest in music and has belonged to various orchestras. Lawrence Sorrentino, who works in advertising, is an active fundraiser and has organized many musical charity events. He also sings with an 18-piece swing band.

www.ambertrust.org

Our vibrant new website is up and running and is already making a big difference to the children we support through online donations.

To raise awareness of AMBER's vital and challenging work, we need your help.

Please will you spread the word by encouraging more people to visit the site. You can do this by putting a link on your own website, by sending one to your colleagues, or by sharing it with your Facebook friends, and even Tweeting about us.



To find out more about any of the children we have featured in this Newsletter, please look at the 'Children's Stories' section of our website – www.ambertrust.org



The AMBER Trust

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Registered Charity No: 1050503 • Company No: 3117803