



Valerie Barber PR

Nurturing Young Talent

Young Concert Artists Trust (YCAT) Celebrates 25 Years of Support for Exceptional Young Artists and Ensembles

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Lasting achievements and enduring legacies are best measured in time and reach. Those of the Young Concert Artists Trust (YCAT) have certainly reached to the heart of British musical life over the past quarter century. The charity, founded by Sir Ian Hunter in 1984, is preparing to celebrate its 25th anniversary in style with two Wigmore Hall gala concerts and a vibrant programme of performances from its latest cohort of young artists. The gala events’ roster of musicians underlines YCAT’s distinguished record for identifying the finest artists of the future; it also spotlights the Trust’s wholehearted commitment to nurturing and supporting exceptional young artists as their careers unfold.

Wigmore Hall hosts the first YCAT gala on Saturday 24 April 2010, with an unmissable programme of works by Schubert, Vaughan Williams, Rachmaninov and Shostakovich. Ian Bostridge (accompanied by Julius Drake) represents YCAT artists past, in company with the Trust’s current artists and winners of its 2009 Public Final Auditions. The line-up includes Thomas Gould (violin), Philip Higham (cello), Alexander Romanovsky (piano) and Adam Walker (flute), and the Doric String Quartet, Heath Quartet and Sacconi Quartet, with BBC Young Musician 2006 finalist Huw Morgan also among the participants. The second YCAT gala concert, in the Wigmore Hall diary for Wednesday 23 June 2010, brings together the Belcea, Heath and Navarra quartets to perform Respighi’s *Il Tramonto* with mezzo-soprano Helen Sherman. Schoenberg’s *Verklärte Nacht* Op.4 and Mendelssohn’s vivacious String Octet in E-flat Op.20 also stand on the evening’s programme.

Alasdair Tait, YCAT’s chief executive, welcomes the silver jubilee season, not least for the opportunities it provides to promote the charity’s work. He expects to extend the Trust’s donor-base of Friends and other supporters over the next year and to reinforce its funds. “Above all, we aim to spread the word about what we do as part of our 25th anniversary celebrations,” he comments. “The message is simple: we are unique as an organisation. There’s nothing to compare with YCAT in terms of providing long-term support, advice and development for young artists. Identifying, nurturing, promoting and supporting exceptional young talent are central to what we do. Our nurturing service is unlike anything else.”

The Trust’s four keywords – Identifying, Nurturing, Promoting and Supporting – reflect the broad scope of Sir Ian Hunter’s original vision and its development over the past 25 years. The YCAT story bears witness to an organisation devoted to helping artists in the early stages of a career, individuals or chamber ensembles in need of professional representation but not sufficiently established to secure an agent’s contract.

In short, the Trust applies strategic thinking to its work with selected young artists. The nurturing process is not directed towards career shortcuts; rather, it looks to build on an individual’s existing strengths and help them reach considered decisions about artistic and career development.

Ian Bostridge, selected as a YCAT Artist in 1992, has since progressed to the top of his profession. The tenor recalls the impact on his life of being selected for YCAT representation. "What followed was a mixture of emotional support, promotions, commercial guidance, musical advice and argument," he says. "If it hadn't been for YCAT, I'd probably still be dithering about whether to become a singer or not, anxiously weighing the pros and cons. So, thank you YCAT."

During his time as cellist with the Belcea Quartet, Alasdair Tait was another beneficiary of the Trust's support. "I see my role here now as one of providing advice, especially drawn from my background of having been there, of knowing what YCAT can do," he notes. "Having been in their shoes, I can ask young artists if they're sure that what they are doing is right for them. I am always ready to ask people to think about what they really need to do."

The YCAT acronym can be found on prominent display in the biographies of over 80 soloists and ensembles. Its alumni list is rich in leading figures from the world of classical music, with Alison Balsom, Emily Beynon, Ian Bostridge, Caroline Dale, Philip Dukes, Susan Gritton, Charles Hazlewood, Laurent Korcia, Joanna MacGregor, Claire Rutter, Lucy Wakeford, Elizabeth Watts and Llyr Williams among the Trust's family of artists. Its record of past and current ensembles is no less distinguished, including the Belcea Quartet, the Britten Quartet, the Gould Piano Trio, the Kungsbacka Piano Trio, the Leopold String Trio and O Duo. A swift survey of artists represented by YCAT shows how the Trust's rigorous annual auditions process is open to the widest range of instrumentalists. Although piano and violin are inevitably prominent among YCAT artists, the charity has also worked tirelessly to nurture and promote flute, guitar, double-bass, percussion, trumpet, saxophone and viola.

During its lifetime, YCAT has developed close partnerships and securely established relations with promoters at home and overseas. "We have a network of British promoters who come straight to us, because they know YCAT can provide the top level of performance," observes Alasdair Tait, whose ongoing international work as musician and teacher have clearly helped deliver word of the Trust's artists to new ears. There is, he continues, a growing recognition that YCAT musicians are among the most compelling young talents of the day.

"It's the nurturing role that really attracted me to YCAT," says the Trust's Chief Executive. "I understand the high pressures that performers often experience at an early age. It's up to us to say, 'You don't need to do all of this now – let's plan and pace things differently'. There's a sense in which YCAT is a nursery, raising and building up young artists. The opportunities we offer are about developing skills of communication with audiences. We're there at crucial times to encourage and advise."

The Trust's nurturing service for fine natural talent receives a new 25th anniversary year component with the launch of the Royal Philharmonic Society/ YCAT Mentoring Scheme.

The initiative begins on Tuesday 13 April 2010 at Wigmore Hall, when Philip Langridge gives a masterclass with Helen Sherman and Adrian Ward. In future, chosen YCAT artists will be matched with established performers for a series of private meetings and, if appropriate, public masterclasses.

"We're here to provide people with the chance to explore fresh ideas, to gain advice from experienced performers and to allow YCAT artists to make mistakes," says Alasdair Tait. "I believe this also sets us apart from commercial management. We are a charity and not a commercial agency. As musical standards continue to rise, it becomes even harder for agents to take risks with young artists, at least until they can see their potential being realised. The concerts required to develop those artists are not commercially viable, which is where YCAT's own concerts and the opportunities we can create elsewhere are so important."

Notes for Editors

YOUNG CONCERT ARTISTS TRUST (YCAT)

Identifying, nurturing, promoting and supporting exceptional young artists

IDENTIFYING	YCAT artists are identified through a rigorous annual audition process (applications available online; the 2010 Public Final Auditions take place on Friday 21 May at Wigmore Hall).
NURTURING	At a critical time in their development YCAT offers guidance and advice alongside a full artist management service to selected artists for 3 – 5 years with a view towards handing them on to suitable commercial representation.
PROMOTING	Through a series of YCAT presentation concerts at Wigmore Hall, Purcell Room, Bridgewater Hall and Jacqueline du Pré Music Building, YCAT aims to promote the artists to a wider audience.
SUPPORTING	As a charity, YCAT is entirely reliant on the generosity of individuals and trusts which helps to support exceptional young artists and ensembles at a pivotal stage in their careers.

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