

## JAZZ IN FINSBURY CIRCUS: THE VIEW FROM THE BANDSTAND

On Wednesday 27 June, I was fortunate to play a lunchtime set as part of the 'Jazz in Finsbury Circus' – organised by the Musicians' Company as part of the City of London Festival. As the day approached I had been a little concerned by the amount of rain we had experienced – but no – we had no rain (not until the last note was played/sung)!!

I was joined by Nikki Iles on keyboards; tenor sax Karen Sharp; double bass Julie Walkington and on drums Mark Fletcher – an honorary 'girl' for the event. All wonderful musicians and kindred spirits. Our repertoire consisted of a mixture of familiar jazz standards by Gershwin, Cole Porter et al but with the odd surprise or French 'chanson' – to keep it spontaneous and light. With such great musicians to sing with – the experience was definitely of the 'feel-good' variety. Jazz is always music to 'feel good to' in my opinion and the nature of improvised solos and inter-play make it very lively and communicative stuff.

After the concert, over a coffee, we all agreed that the audience had been warmly responsive and that such concerts are



Tina May



Karen Sharp



The View from the Bandstand

## YOUNG JAZZ MUSICIAN COMPETITION

September 2007

Six fine young musicians played magnificent jazz at the recent wonderful Musicians' Company competition gig at Pizza on the Park. The nominators produced a tremendous "long list" of possible competitors and the Company's Jazz Committee then did a great job in choosing the six people we really wanted to compete. For those who weren't there, the competitors were: Josh Blackmore (drums); Mike Janisch (bass); Chris Montague (guitar); Michael Mwenzo (trombone and vocals); "Percy" Purseglove (trumpet); and Richard Shepherd (saxophones). Aisling Lavelle (not part of the competition) sang *Laura*



The 2007 winner Mike Janisch

and *End of a Beautiful Friendship* at the start of the second set. This innovation, which was suggested by Tina May and Bernard David, was much appreciated by the audience. I'm sure the Jazz Committee will feel very positive about turning this new idea into a tradition.

Two sets of scintillating jazz by a band, which – as a consequence of the way our competition works – had never played together before, featured tunes by Monk, Coltrane, Dizzy, and others from the great American songbook. The audience then voted for Mike Janisch on bass as the winner. All the contenders received significant quantities of votes, and the most frequently heard comment was "It's really hard



## JIM HART'S GEMINI

Pizza on the Park –  
March 2007

The Worshipful Company of Musicians awards two of its annual prizes to jazz artists and rightly so when one considers that the winners sight read as flawlessly as their classical counterparts but can produce a dazzling instrumental solo as well. The winners were drummer-

composer Tony Kinsey (silver medal, lifetime award) and vibraphonist-drummer Jim Hart (bronze medal, talent worthy of further recognition).

Hart, like pianist Gwilym Simcock, went to Chetham's School in Manchester, where musicianship is developed with dynamism and energy. He played four-mallet vibraphone and marimba last night but is also an accomplished drummer and pianist. He met his frontline partner

altoist Ivo Neame, who explained that the group's name developed from "Jim-and-I", at London's Guildhall jazz course.

With bassist Michael Coady and drummer Dave Smith, they made impressive yet somehow joyless music that sounded almost too fresh for its own good. *So You Said* (a waltz), *Kindred* (slow ballad), *No Noodles at All* (calypso) and *Liner Notes* (fast neo-bop) all boasted complex lines and rhythmic intricacy, but