

“Concerto for Meeow and Howl”

BILLIE DEAN

Baltie, a chocolate brown Burmese-cross, and Monty, a dashing dachshund, yesterday received a standing ovation at the premier performance of their original work: “Concerto for Meeow and Howl”. The concert raised a record \$150 000 for charity.

The Prime Minister, who attended the benefit, was full of praise. “I knew dogs could howl, but I’d never heard of a cat singing before,” she said. “Baltie has a very unusual tenor, and he harmonised perfectly with Monty. It was an inspiring performance.”

The concert included a surprise performance of “Happy Birthday” for Susie Wilks, a member of the audience and family friend. Susie, who turned fourteen yesterday, said she was amazed. “I was blown away



when they sang ‘Happy Birthday’ to me during the encore. It really was the coolest thing.”

Baltie and Monty are both former inmates of the city RSPCA shelter. Joan and Dan Wishton, of Little Bay, rescued the pair, along with five other cats and three dogs.

The couple said they didn’t have to teach the animals to sing; it just happened naturally.



“Monty started howling one day when he heard Dan belting out ‘The Wild Colonial Boy’ in the shower,” said Joan. “And when Baltie joined in, we knew we were onto something.”

From there, it was a short step to a full-length concerto. “A small reward goes a long way in training,” explained Dan. “When we wanted them to sing on cue, we’d give each one a tasty treat when they did it right.”

“Our animals love to sing,” he added. “It might be because they’re trying to drown out the sound of my voice, but they have a good time anyway. We’re training the others to be a dog

and cat choir. And Zippy, our little kelpie, is showing signs of wanting to play the piano. So we may even start a band!”

Joan and Dan organised the charity event as a thank you to the RSPCA. “We get so much love and pleasure from the animals who share our lives,” said Joan. “If it weren’t for the RSPCA, we would never have met Baltie and Monty. We just had to give something back.”

The next performance of the “Concerto for Meeow and Howl” will be Saturday, 14 January at 2 p.m. at the National Theatre. Admission is \$10 and all proceeds go to the RSPCA.