

Saxophonist's four concerts celebrate Queen's Hall's fortieth anniversary

Saxophonist Tommy Smith plays the first of four concerts he is due to give as part of the Queen's Hall's fortieth anniversary celebrations this year when he recreates his 1996 recording *Beasts of Scotland* with a specially assembled sextet on Thursday 18 April.

Smith, who was appointed OBE for services to jazz and education in this year's New Year Honours List, has had a long association with the Queen's Hall, having celebrated his twenty-first birthday there in 1988 in a concert with top American duo Chick Corea & Gary Burton.

Tommy Smith said : "I can remember, as a young musician, aspiring to play at the Queen's Hall because back then it was already becoming well known for hosting concerts by some of the leading jazz musicians in the world."

Among the musicians who appeared at the Queen's Hall in its early years were a young Wynton Marsalis, who brought his quintet with his saxophonist brother Branford to the long running Friday night jazz series just after he released his first album in 1982. Big names including Sonny Rollins, Nina Simone, Gil Evans and George Russell followed and the singer Kurt Elling, who has since returned to the hall as a guest of the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra, remembers, as a student at Edinburgh University, going to see trumpeter Don Cherry play there in a series of concerts that also included Smith in the late 1980s.



Tommy Smith OBE

Smith's Beasts of Scotland will feature saxophonist Andy Panayi and drummer Tom Gordon from the original recording alongside trumpeter James Copus, pianist Pete Johnstone, and bassist Calum Gourlay. Actor Tam Dean Burn will narrate the poems by the late Edwin Morgan that inspired Smith's suite of compositions, which was commissioned by Glasgow Jazz Festival and proved a major success on its first performance.

Following the Beasts of Scotland concert, Smith's duo with pianist Brian Kellock, with special guest, leading Gaelic singer Kathleen MacInnes, will play on 13 June. His widely acclaimed 'Coltrane' quartet, Embodying the Light, appears on 17 October and he gives a solo saxophone concert on 19th December.

All the concerts will include opening sets from musicians who have come through Smith's youth orchestra and the jazz course he initiated at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Glasgow.

Smith said : "I wanted to give these young players the experience of playing at a venue with such a great legacy and the chance to be part of this special anniversary.

"So we'll have Square One, who are already multiple award winners, opening the first concert, followed by the great young pianists Fergus McCreadie and Alan Benzie with their trios and then my youth jazz orchestra on the final concert. Most of them will be playing at the Queen's Hall for the first time but I'm sure they'll be back as headliners before too long."