

Call for Edinburgh youngsters to pipe up for championships

Young pipers in Edinburgh are encouraged to enter the world's biggest schools piping competition.

From quartets to pipe bands at the top of their game, the Scottish Schools Pipe Band Championships offers a platform to showcase Scotland's musical heritage – and the search is now on for performers from Edinburgh to take part in the event next March.

The Championships feature eight categories including a Freestyle section which encourages musicians to team up with singers and dancers to create a performance which offers a novel twist on piping music with emphasis on innovation and fun.

This year's (2019) event in Livingston attracted around 800 players, including some as young as eight and a band from Benbecula in the Outer Hebrides who had to travel two days to get to the competition.

Alexandra Duncan, Chief Executive of The Scottish Schools Pipes and Drums Trust (SSPDT), who organise the event, said they want to see entry numbers surpass the 65 bands that took part this year.

She said: "We want to encourage any individual, school or community group in Edinburgh to look at supporting pupils to represent their schools next year – to proudly represent their region and to help us make these Championships the biggest yet.

“We’d be delighted to secure entries from performers who have only recently started playing, perhaps as a result of support from the Trust.

“The Championships celebrate Scotland’s incredible musical heritage and showcase the young people who are its future, helping to preserve an integral part of our country’s culture.

“It’s a truly enjoyable day of competition, fellowship and fun and the young musicians attending have a chance to create long-term friendships with each other.”

Lisa Madigan of Skye Youth Pipe Band said all their members enjoyed the experience and atmosphere of this year’s competition.

She added: “It’s a great way for them to meet up with other bands and gives them great incentive to practice hard for next year’s challenge.”

To enter a quartet requires just four pipers, or three pipers and a tutor. Pipe bands can enter categories ranging from Debut to Novice Juvenile. Schools that need more players to form a quartet or a band can join forces with other schools in the same local education authority. All schools or combined schools that enter a quartet or a pipe band are eligible to enter the Freestyle competition, too.

The SSPDT was created after its founders recognised that pipe bands – once thriving and at the heart of local communities – were struggling to find new members, yet pipes and drums were not taught in schools.

Since then, the Trust has helped 47 schools pipe bands to form, building on tuition provided in 265 schools. The Trust also helps existing youth and school pipe bands with grants and the free loan of bagpipes. It is currently supporting projects in 22 local authority areas.

Alexandra added: “Pipe bands open the doors to travel for young people and are source of pride and focus in schools and the community.

“More importantly though, they give opportunities to develop a unique set of skills for life – resilience, teamwork, self-esteem, perseverance and more.

“This is why our work is so important to us. Sadly, the majority of state school pupils in Scotland do not have the opportunity to learn piping and drumming and we are grateful to the parents, schools and local authorities that are working with us to overcome this disadvantage.”

The Scottish Schools Pipe Band Championships will take place in Kilmarnock on Sunday 8 March 2020.

For more information and details on how to enter the Championships, please visit: <https://thechampionships.org.uk/>