

Singer's Usher Hall highlight captured on new Scottish National Jazz Orchestra video

Texan rising star singer Jazzmeia Horn made a big impression on Scottish audiences when she appeared with the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra on tour last November.

And now one of the highlights of her concert at the Usher Hall, her own song Free Your Mind, is set to feature in the orchestra's latest video.

Arranged by pianist and jazz educator Bill Dobbins, Free Your Mind first appeared on Horn's second album, Love & Liberation, which like her debut release, A Social Call, was nominated for a GRAMMY.

SNJO director, saxophonist Tommy Smith was introduced to Horn's singing at Rochester Jazz Festival in 2018 on the festival director, John Nugent's recommendation.

"I was hypnotised by her presentation of each lyric," says Smith. "It was so vivid and credible, her storytelling and improvisation took jazz singing to another level. To be honest, I thought I might listen to a few songs and then go and check out something else but I stayed for the whole concert and afterwards, I bought her CD and decided that we had to introduce her to audiences in Scotland."

Horn played concerts with the SNJO in Perth and Glasgow, as well as Edinburgh and left listeners entranced.

Reviewing the Usher Hall concert for London Jazz News, locally based music critic Mark McKergow described Horn's singing as "stunning" and singled out Free Your Mind as "surely destined to be a standard of the future."

Born and raised in Dallas, Horn was given the name Jazzmeia by her grandmother, a church pianist and jazz fan. She has been mentored by vocal masters Bobby McFerrin and Jon Hendricks and first came to wider attention when she won the coveted Thelonious Monk Institute International Jazz Competition in 2015. She has since toured the world, singing highly individual versions of jazz standards and her own socially aware songs, which she describes as calls to action.

Tommy Smith, who edited the Usher Hall video during lockdown at home in Lanarkshire, says he hopes the SNJO will get another opportunity to work with Horn but recognises that live concerts face an uncertain future for now.

“Jazzmeia’s a fantastic talent,” he says. “She also keeps herself busy. She has a new book coming out on 21st August called *Strive from Within: The Jazzmeia Horn Approach*. She’s also teaching at the New School University in New York City and has an online course called *The Jazz Horn Initiative*. We’ve had to reschedule our 2020 concerts into 2021, so we’ll have to see if Jazzmeia’s schedule and ours can align sometime after that.”

Free Your Mind will be available to view on YouTube from 2pm on Tuesday 18th August.