

# **Piping hot musical extravaganza back after two year absence**

## **Talented school pupils to take centre stage at national pipe band event**

More than 700 talented young musicians will take part in Scotland's biggest piping and drumming competition for school pupils as it returns after a two-year absence.

The competition, launched to create a renaissance in Scotland's national instrument, will see more than 60 pipe bands, quartets and freestyle ensembles, gather for one of the biggest events in the bagpiping calendar.

Now organisers of the Scottish Schools Pipe Band Championship (SSPBC) are urging schools in Edinburgh which may not yet have signed up to claim their place, with the day providing a thrilling showcase for young musicians, irrespective of their level.

The competition was launched in 2013, as part of a nationwide drive by the Scottish Schools Pipes and Drums Trust (SSPDT) to revive dwindling access to the instruments across schools – despite evidence of multiple positive benefits.

Alexandra Duncan, Chief Executive of SSPDT, said: “The Championships are a highlight of the year for young players who not only get a chance to perform in public, but to test themselves against their peers. While it is a serious competition it is also a lot of fun.

“Being a part of something like a pipe band can positively influence young people in so many ways. It is a great way to make long-lasting friendships and it is proven to improve a host of life skills by building confidence, improving concentration and fostering teamwork.

“While the pandemic forced us to either cancel events or run a reduced event online, we know there is huge pent up demand for this event among pupils and tutors alike. It is going to be brilliant.

“The pandemic weakened many of the bands because teaching had to move online and in some places it stopped altogether for quite a long time so we have made it even easier to take part by adjusting the rules which can be found on our website. Also, we recognise that the cost of travel has gone up a lot so we gave doubled our financial grants. The Championships are free to enter for spectators as well as players and there are cash prizes to be won.”

The event will take place on Sunday, March 12, 2023 at the William McIlvanney Campus in Kilmarnock, within its modern theatre that can seat up to 500 people.

Expert judges will be in attendance on the day to determine the worthy winners, with the likes of Craig Munro of the Red Hot Chilli Pipers and Steven Blake of Rura on the star-studded judging panel.

There are eight categories ranging from Debut to Novice Juvenile. To enter a quartet requires just four pipers, or three pipers and a tutor. 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 also eligible to enter the Freestyle competition.

SSPDT will also be presenting the Eilidh MacLeod Endeavour Award to pay tribute to the young piper from Barra who died in

the Manchester Arena attack in 2017.

David Johnston, Convener of the SSPDT, said: “The Championships are one of the highlights of many schools’ calendars and we can’t wait to welcome everyone back after such a long break.

“It’s always a special day at the Championships and we’re warmly inviting school bands and supporters to come along to a day of good fun and excellent music.”

The Championship is independently organised by the Scottish Schools Pipes and Drums Trust (SSPDT). It carries the support of the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association (RSPBA) but is not a RSPBA competition.

SSPDT believes that every pupil should have the chance to learn the pipes and drums on the same basis as other school instrument tuition.

The national charity was formed with the belief that pipe bands are much more than a musical pastime; they develop life and employability skills and attributes such as teamwork, shared and individual achievement, resilience and perseverance, self-confidence, camaraderie and a sense of discipline and dress.

For more information on the Scottish Schools Pipe Band Championships, visit <http://www.thechampionships.org.uk/>

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