

Harps and fiddles, saxophones and pipes set for Linlithgow

A musician who has been described as “a one-woman harp festival” opens the latest series of concerts promoted by Red Door at St Peter’s Church in Linlithgow on Friday 16 February.

Karen Marshalsay is one of the few harp players who specialise in all three of the harps in the Scottish tradition. The gut-strung clarsach will be familiar to followers of folk music as it’s the harp that’s featured prominently over the past fifty years. Karen also plays the smaller wire-strung harp from the Gaelic tradition and the harp that often takes audiences by surprise, the bray harp with its buzzing, almost sitar-like tone.

“The bray was used in the renaissance period as its brays – which describe its sound quite aptly and are small pins that sit against the strings making them buzz – enabled the instrument to cut through the hubbub at soirees in big houses,” says Karen. “Back then, the typical ceilidh band would consist of a bray harp, a crumhorn and tabor or hand drum. It looks like the other harps except it’s slimmer and if you see harps in paintings from that time, they’re usually brays.”

Following Karen’s concert, Red Door presents a trio featuring experienced saxophonist Graham Walker with two of Scotland’s young jazz stars, guitarist Kevin Henderson and bassist Ali

Watson on Friday 15th March.

“Graham lives locally but was based in Belgium for many years and worked at a fairly high level on the scene over there,” says Red Door’s Robin Connelly. “He’s opened concerts for us before so we thought it was time to give him his own concert with Ali, whom people might know from saxophonist Matt Carmichael’s band, and Kevin, another of the many great young players who are emerging in Glasgow these days.”

Another saxophonist, John Burgess pays his first visit to St Peter’s with keyboardist Campbell Normand on Friday 19 April.

“John is a marvellously versatile player who absolutely excels on ballads,” says Robin Connelly. “He’s played on both sides of the Atlantic, studied with the great American saxophonist Joe Henderson and worked with Alan Skidmore, who is a real hero of the British jazz scene. John is playing a programme of Standards, Ballads and Blues and we’re looking forward to hearing his wonderfully rich tone and tremendously accomplished, classy musicianship in the intimate setting of St Peter’s.

Also due to appear at St Peter’s are the adventurous harp and fiddle duo Catriona McKay & Chris Stout, who return after two previous triumphs on Friday 3rd May, and pipes and fiddle partnership Brìghde Chaimbeul & Aidan O’Rourke, who appear in Friday 7th June.

“These are really outstanding duos,” said Robin Connelly. “We’re particularly pleased to be presenting them as they’ll make it a tremendous finish to the series.”

Red Door concerts are sponsored by Veitch Solicitors & Notaries and tickets are available from Eventbrite.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/karen-marshalsay-presented-by-red-door-tickets-781434039247?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>

