

Queen's Hall concert showcases young Scottish jazz talents

The Scottish National Jazz Orchestra's Nu-Age Sounds marks a major celebration of Scotland's vibrantly exciting young jazz scene in a concert at the Queen's Hall on Sunday 3 March.

Conceived and produced by the orchestra's artistic director, saxophonist Tommy Smith, OBE, the project brings together a cast of trailblazing musicians, each of them multiple award winners, with the internationally acclaimed SNJO and visual producer Dillon Barrie.

Scottish Album of the Year 2022 winner and Mercury Music Prize nominee, pianist Fergus McCreadie, BBC Young Jazz Musician 2022, bassist Ewan Hastie, singer kitti, saxophonists Helena Kay and Matt Carmichael and trombonists Noushy and Liam Shortall, who has earned acclaim under the name corto.alto, are all contributing new music to the project. Smith has also orchestrated music by his band KARMA, whose debut album won the Album of the Year title at the Scottish Jazz Awards.

Watching as students from the jazz course he oversees at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland have gone on to make an impression nationally and internationally, Smith decided to showcase this success and bring orchestral jazz, with its long history, to a young audience who might not have experienced

this rich tradition before.

“As Fergus, Matt, Peter, Ewan, Noushy, and Liam were students of mine for four years at the RCS, I greatly respect and admire their musicianship and observe with amazement their blossoming careers,” says Smith. “Educating musicians of this calibre in harmony, composition, etc., was a joy, especially sharing my ideas in music business, which I taught throughout their four years. I am very proud of where they have all reached. It’s also great to have kitti and Helena onboard as they are very much part of Scotland’s thriving young jazz scene.”

Noushy and kitti’s music is being arranged by Berlin-based saxophonist-composer-bandleader Fabia Mantwill and Ewan Hastie’s by pianist-composer Florian Ross, from Cologne. However, Fergus McCreadie, Helena Kay, Matt Carmichael and Liam Shortall are rising to the challenge of orchestrating their own work to an international standard.

Each piece of music will be accompanied by a video, created by Dillon Barrie and his team and projected on to the stage backcloth.

“Dillon, who I chose as a visual producer and social media guru of Nu-Age Sounds, is also a current student of mine at the RCS,” says Smith. “I’ve seen him really charge on, producing his successful Supersonic shows over the last three years. Dillon and his team, with Daisy Mulholland, Niki Zaupa, and Connor McGhie, will bring an illuminating vision for our artists and concertgoers.”

For Smith, the concerts are a timely indication of the strength of jazz in Scotland. A scene has grown up around the RCS jazz course in Glasgow and there are talented young musicians emerging across the country.

“I am confident that Nu-Age Sounds will be a standout tour for the SNJO’s ever-growing audience,” says Smith. “It’s also

vital for the orchestra to embrace the younger audience and adopt a new focus on future sounds and fusions, widening our musical horizons.”







