

Young jazz musicians fire up St Bride's and Linlithgow

The Tommy Smith Youth Jazz Orchestra begins a new year with a fresh group of young musicians playing two concerts in the Edinburgh and Lothians area.

The St Bride's Centre in Orwell Terrace on Sunday 6 October and Queen Margaret Hall in Linlithgow on Saturday 2 November are the venues where the concerts will take place.

Founded in 2002 to provide a free educational opportunity for promising young jazz players, the Tommy Smith Youth Jazz Orchestra has gone on to nurture some of the biggest talents in Scottish jazz today.

"I wanted to give young musicians the chance to play orchestral jazz as a way of developing the skills necessary to play jazz in any environment," said Smith, whose own saxophone talents are recognised around the world.

In a big band, Smith said, there's a "camaraderie" where the musicians encourage each other to improvise and take chances.

"Standing up to play your first solo can be quite daunting," says Smith. "But if you don't do it, you're never going to play jazz and we try to create a situation where the musicians can relax and feel good about themselves and what they play. Then they can go on to work on ideas and progress."

With three albums released to enthusiastic media responses internationally, the orchestra has a body of work and a

history of performances that set a standard for new arrivals to work towards.

“Seeing previous members going on to win awards and create an impression around the world with their recording careers can be a real fillip for the musicians who follow in their footsteps,” said Smith. “The youth orchestra can also be a stepping stone to the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra. We play the same music, the same arrangements, as the SNJO so it’s good preparation for anyone making the step up.”

The concerts in St Bride’s and in Linlithgow will feature big-band music by Miles Davis, Ella Fitzgerald, Astor Piazzolla, Jaco Pastorius, Dizzy Gillespie, Count Basie, and Duke Ellington. There will also be a chance to hear the orchestra’s promising singer, Laura Oghagbon, who has already made a strong impression on audiences.

The concerts begin at 2pm at St Bride’s and 7.30pm in Linlithgow

