

Orchestras celebrate Duke at the Queen's Hall

The Scottish National Jazz Orchestra is bringing what is believed to be one of the biggest-ever celebrations of jazz legend Duke Ellington's music to Edinburgh on Sunday 1 December.

Comprising thirty-four musicians, Remembering Duke will feature an opening set by the seventeen-strong Tommy Smith Youth Jazz Orchestra. The SNJO will then play its internationally acclaimed Ellington interpretations with their special guest, singer Lucy-Anne Daniels adding gospel music-inspired selections of the great composer's songs.

"Duke Ellington has been an inspiration to musicians and composers across the musical spectrum for almost 100 years," says SNJO founder and musical director, saxophonist Tommy Smith. "The breadth of his writing encompasses songs that were the pop music of the day and hugely descriptive suites that compare with works in the classical canon in terms of ambition. It's wonderful to witness young players from the TikTok era finding their way into playing jazz through Ellington as generations before have done."

The SNJO's expertise as Ellington interpreters has developed over its twenty-eight-year history and was recognised internationally through its 2012 recording, *In the Spirit of Duke*, which captured the orchestra in top form live on tour.

“To be praised in the US for performing Duke Ellington’s music was special recognition,” says Smith. “Quite a few of the musicians who took part in that tour are no longer with us but the players who have come in have picked up the baton, knowing that they must measure up to high standards. At the same time, Ellington is now in the orchestra’s DNA and his music is an essential part of what we do.”

For Remembering Duke, the Tommy Smith Youth Jazz Orchestra will reinvigorate Ellington classics and rarities, adding to the SNJO’s command of highlights from throughout the master’s repertoire.

The Edinburgh concert is one of three tour dates and takes place at the Queen’s Hall, which the SNJO has come to regard as its Edinburgh home and which has a near-forty-five year history of staging jazz concerts.

“We’re looking forward to playing this great music, which has so much depth and character, and to giving the audience an experience that will be authentic in every way in terms of staging, attire and equipment as well as the music,” says Smith. “The Queen’s Hall has become a very familiar venue for us and it’s a great setting. We always enjoy playing there and it’s great to be part of a jazz lineage that has included so many legends of the music from Sonny Rollins, Nina Simone and Gil Evans through to Wynton Marsalis and the current younger generation.”



SNJO Photo Derek Clark



SNJO PHOTO Andy Catlin