

The Scottish National Jazz Orchestra

directed by Tommy Smith

In the Spirit of Duke

December 2022



In the Spirit of Duke

Known as The Duke, Edward Kennedy Ellington is considered amongst the world's greatest jazz musicians and composers with a musical legacy covering six decades. He reached out and touched a worldwide audience in a fashion that may never be equalled with music that was evocative, emotional, and richly textured in mood.

The Scottish National Jazz Orchestra has chosen a fabulous programme of foot-tapping favourites, infectious swing, mellow mood, and contemporary jazz to inspire and entertain all. Great tunes such as Mood Indigo or Caravan will alternate with less familiar pieces, but all are guaranteed to produce an evening not to be missed!

"It's an exhilarating re-enactment of Ellington." – The Guardian

"It is testimony to both the band and the music that it all emerged sounding freshly-minted." – The Scotsman

Let's be Friends

If you enjoyed tonight's concert, please do consider becoming a "Friend of the SNJO" and help support the future of our orchestras and that of jazz in Scotland. We welcome new friends at any time.

If you would like to know more about our memberships, please contact Catherine Gillespie:
phone +44 7446 286412
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We would also like to encourage everyone to please sign up for our email updates at snjo.co.uk/news

PROGRAMME NOTES

Music composed by jazz pianist and bandleader Duke Ellington in honour of the recently departed Queen Elizabeth will feature in the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra's In the Spirit of Duke concerts taking place in Edinburgh, St Andrews and Glasgow from 1st to 3rd December.

In 1958, Ellington met Her Majesty following a performance by his orchestra at an arts festival in Leeds. The two reportedly got on famously and Ellington, smitten, composed a suite of music that he recorded on a single gold disc and sent to Buckingham Palace the following year.

The SNJO's founder, saxophonist Tommy Smith, when receiving his OBE from the Queen in 2019, asked her if she remembered receiving the one and only copy of an LP Duke Ellington had specially created for her and the Queen confirmed that she did.

"The music was supposed to remain unavailable to the general public but an album was eventually released in 1976 following Ellington's death," says Smith. "I'm really glad that it was because the Queen's Suite includes some outstanding writing by Ellington and his co-composer/arranger, Billy Strayhorn that really needs to be heard and appreciated."

Among the pieces that comprise the Queen's Suite is The Single Petal of a Rose, which has become part of the standard jazz repertoire and was included on the SNJO's In the Spirit of Duke album, which was released to international acclaim in 2013.

"We included three of the movements from the Queen's Suite on the album alongside other Ellington classics including Rocking in Rhythm and Black and Tan Fantasy," says Smith. "The great thing about Ellington and Strayhorn's music is that it spanned some six decades and it maintained its high quality all the way through and right up to Duke's death in 1974."

For Smith, who had the opportunity to play in concert with a number of former Ellington sidemen as a young musician, it's an honour to be celebrating Ellington.

"He's such an inspirational figure," he says. "We'll be following every last Ellington detail, including the stage set-up, using specially sourced period trumpet and trombone mutes and playing scores that in some cases were specially transcribed from Ellington performances. We want to give audiences as close to the real-deal Ellington experience as possible."

© Rob Adams

PROGRAMME

Black & Tan Fantasy / Creole Love Song

In The Hall of The Mountain King

Jack the Bear

Le Sucrier Velours

Daybreak Express

Concerto For Cootie

Harlem Air Shaft

Mood Indigo

Ko-Ko

Morning Mood

Anitra's Dance

The Single Petal of a Rose

Rockin' In Rhythm

Nutcracker Suite Overture

Prelude To A Kiss

Happy Go Lucky Local

Solitude

Take The A Train

Sophisticated Lady

Sepia Panorama

Never No Lament

Perdido

Sunset & The Mocking Bird

Diminuendo & Crescendo in Blue

THE ORCHESTRA

Reeds

Martin Kershaw

Helena Kay

Tommy Smith

Konrad Wiszniewski

Bill Fleming

Trumpets

Ryan Quigley

Sean Gibbs

Tom MacNiven

Lorne Cowieson

Trombones

Kieran McLeod

Liam Shortall

Michael Owers

Rhythm

Peter Johnstone

Calum Gourlay

Alyn Cosker

DUKE ELLINGTON

Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington (1899 – 1974) was one of the most significant jazz musicians of all time. He was a composer, bandleader, pianist and arranger who took jazz from its localized roots and crafted it into a uniquely American art form.

Ellington enjoyed a comfortable upbringing in Washington DC, and began piano lessons at the age of seven. He became a proficient player and, by the time he reached his teens, he was playing regularly at middle-class house parties and society gatherings. He moved to New York in his early twenties where, sometime in September 1923, he and his seven-piece band secured a residency at the ‘Hollywood Club’ on Broadway. That engagement lasted about four years, until a better offer came in from the famous Cotton Club in Harlem.

At the Cotton Club, Ellington’s band expanded from seven to eleven pieces, largely because they were required to play a variety of music for the club’s revues. These shows featured comedy, dance, vaudeville, burlesque, and ballads, and demanded high levels of musicianship and versatility. A weekly radio broadcast from the club aided national exposure, and it was about this time that Ellington’s recording career began in earnest. A string of hit records followed, but these successes became harder to sustain as the swing era took hold. In the USA, Ellington’s refined, aesthetic approach had narrow appeal compared to the dance bands of the time, but his music still had an audience elsewhere.

The Ellington band’s visit to Scotland and England in 1933, and mainland Europe the following year, was a response to their increasing popularity across the Atlantic. It also proved a major publicity coup, boosting Ellington’s credentials as a serious bandleader at home and abroad. Ellington’s ambitions for jazz were, nevertheless, greater still. A turning point came in 1936, when Billy Strayhorn joined Ellington as an arranger. Together they produced some of Ellington’s most memorable work. Throughout the 1940’s, and aided by Strayhorn, he began to concentrate on longer, more developed pieces of music. He drew from classical styles for inspiration, but crafted them into jazz suites, often with challenging themes.

Ellington tried to continue forging new ideas, but ultimately he was unable to take his audience, and even some of his musicians with him. The period of hiatus that followed was broken in spectacular style with a comeback performance at the Newport Jazz Festival in 1956. This revived his career almost overnight, and led to the recording output that Ellington long sought; one where effusive jazz and artistic vision are synonymous. The outcome is jazz history that is preserved in outstanding recordings, film soundtracks, concert footage, and television appearances. Ellington’s greatest legacy, however, is some of the most cultivated jazz music ever written.

Awards and formal recognition of Ellington’s achievements are curiously few, but they are of the highest order. Duke Ellington won only a single Grammy for a lifetime’s work, but he also received The Presidential Medal of Freedom, The National Order of the Legion of Honour, and a posthumous Pulitzer Prize in appreciation of his contribution to music and art.



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In Memory Of...

We are filled with great sorrow and heavy hearts upon learning of the sudden passing of lifelong Friend Robin McClure.

Our sincere and heartfelt condolences are with Robin's dear friends and family at this time.

We dedicate the 2022 - 23 Concert Season to his memory.

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IN THE SPIRIT OF DUKE



"SNJO's best display ever"

– **The Herald**

"There will be few better records than this released this year - or any other year! SNJO, led by Tommy Smith and recorded live on their 2012 Scottish tour, pay homage to the Duke and, in doing so, somehow manage to put their own stamp on it."

– **Lance Liddle**



"It is testimony to both the band and the music that it all emerged sounding freshly-minted."

– **The Scotsman**



– **The Telegraph**

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GEORGIA CÉCILE

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DIRECTED BY TOMMY SMITH

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