

Cumnock Tryst, RSNO, Royal Conservatoire and more offering prizes to be won at Scottish Young Musicians Solo Performer of the Year, with Nicola Benedetti and Jamie MacDougall set to be involved in grand final

Scottish Young Musicians Solo Performer of the Year is a new Scotland-wide music competition launched by The Music Education Partnership Group, Scotland's only music competition where funding and expertise is offered to every school and Local Authority, giving all pupils in the country the chance to take part.

After much anticipation, the full list of prizes for the competition can now be announced, with some of the UK's leading musical institutions and orchestras taking part.

Hosts of the national final, **The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland**, ranked fifth in the world for performing arts education by QS World Rankings, is offering the winner of the solo competition a coaching session with the relevant head of department, participation in a masterclass, and a studio recording session with an accompanist provided, giving the winner a quality recording that could be used for auditions. The Conservatoire is also providing two runners up a coaching session with the relevant heads of department and participation in a masterclass.

The Cumnock Tryst, a festival of music held annually in Cumnock, is giving the opportunity for a competitor to take one of the recital slots at the festival to be held in Dumfries House on Sunday 8th October 2023. The Tryst, founded by Sir James MacMillan, has a focus on developing compositional skills and creativity since launching as a centre of excellence in the learning and teaching of composition.

Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, recognised as an innovative world leading institution, is offering a winner an immersive bespoke day reflective of their musical interests and aspirations. This will include a private lesson, a professional studio recording, along with a variety of opportunities such as observing masterclasses, attending performances, and other special events. Trinity has a leading reputation for musical theatre and jazz which could present a unique opportunity for a winner in these genres. All travel and accommodation costs will be included along with an overnight stay for both the winner and their chaperone.

A variety of experiences are available to be won from some of Scotland's leading orchestras. **Royal Scottish National Orchestra** is offering the prize of a bespoke experience including time to meet with their CEO, Alastair Mackie, and a meeting with a player of the winner's choice. This prize also includes attending a rehearsal and a pair of concert tickets. A bespoke experience with **Scottish Chamber Orchestra** is also up for grabs, including time with their CEO, Gavin Reid, as well as a player of choice, plus 2 tickets to a concert and the opportunity to attend a rehearsal. Pioneering string orchestra **Scottish Ensemble** have offered a competitor the opportunity to attend a meeting with Scottish Ensemble staff to talk about arts management, access to a rehearsal and 2 tickets for a performance.

The Dunedin Consort, one of the world's leading Baroque ensembles, is offering a competitor an invitation to attend a rehearsal and some one-to-one time with a player at their Acis and Galatea project in June 2022. There will also be two tickets provided to attend the concert at Queen's Hall, Edinburgh on 23 June, including a backstage visit on the day.

Specialist music store **Haydock Music** is providing vouchers for one of the competitors, and **Stringers of Edinburgh**, the UK's leading online retailer for violinists, violists and cellists, is offering the prize of a BAM Case for a string player in the competition. **Band Supplies**, one of the leading Brass & Woodwind Suppliers in the UK, is also giving away vouchers as a prize.

The Corner Shop PR, leading Arts PR agency based in Edinburgh, will do half a day of media and social media training with the winner. This will cover everything from interview training to how to best utilise your social media accounts for a professional career in music.

As previously announced, the overall winner of the national competition will also receive a stunning sculpture by Alexander Stoddart of the Maid of Morven playing the Clarsach.

The majority of Local Authorities across Scotland are taking part in the competition, with many hosting local finals in the coming months to determine who will represent their area in the national final.

Scottish Young Musicians Brass Ensemble of the Year is also taking place in 2022. The winner of this online music competition will be announced on 25 April 2022. The winning ensemble will get an all-expenses paid trip to play a prime slot at the Solo Performer of the Year final on Sunday 29 May at The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. They will also receive a trophy and a prize of £750 to be spent on ensemble music related activities, generously donated in honour of the late legendary trumpet player Philip Jones CBE by wife Ursula.

The final will be presented by singer and broadcaster **Jamie MacDougall**, who will meet with all the young performers backstage beforehand, and feature a special welcome by international classical violinist **Nicola Benedetti**, who was recently announced as Director Designate of Edinburgh International Festival. Further details about the national final, including judges and a full list of competitors, will be revealed in mid-May.

Alan Kerr, Chair of Scottish Young Musicians, said: "It is a wonderful thing to see high-profile institutions, orchestras, and musical companies come together in support of our musicians of the future. Providing performance opportunities for young musicians helps their confidence, wellbeing and abilities not just within music but across their life skills. We hope that all taking part in the competition benefit immensely from the experience, but we're also excited that we can offer such fantastic prizes to these young musicians who have worked so hard to get to this stage."

Sir James Macmillan, founder of the Cumnock Tryst, said: "We are excited to offer the chance to perform at The Cumnock Tryst to the winner of Scottish Young Musicians Solo Performer of the Year. This new competition will be of immense help and encouragement for the aspirations of thousands of young musicians, and we are delighted to support the ambitions of young soloists from around the country."

Jamie MacDougall said: "I'm delighted to be part of this very first Scottish Young Musicians Solo Performer of the Year event. A celebration more than a competition. Once again it looks like Scotland leads the way... Giving ALL children a chance to get involved in making music is so important. Now an opportunity for us all to hear just how much talent there is out there across the country. To see so many of our leading and award-winning

organisations getting behind this is terrific. This is real grass roots stuff and deserves all success.”

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About Scottish Young Musicians

The story started over 20 years ago when brothers Alan and Brian Kerr founded the North Ayrshire Young Musician Competition. It has flourished ever since under the stewardship of Mae Murray and over 20,000 young musicians have enjoyed taking part. From this grew the idea of bringing the Scottish Young Musicians competitions to the whole of Scotland - and that is what they are now setting out to do.

About MEPG

The Music Education Partnership Group (MEPG) will oversee the running of the Scottish Young Musicians Competitions. MEPG brings together stakeholders in music and education across Scotland. MEPG is a registered charity and members organisation which aims to tackle inequity, help young people to realise their potential and challenge perceptions of music education.