



NYJO Programme Notes

Formed in 2008, the Nottingham Youth Jazz Orchestra - www.nottsnyjo.co.uk is part of the Nottingham Youth Orchestra (NYO). Currently there are around 40 players across three bands: an 18-piece NYJO1 Big Band under Musical Director Phil Smith; a large 'development' band called NYJO2 and an 8-piece NYJO Combo, both these are tutored by Ben Lee. The Combo provides extensive opportunity for solo improvisation and several alumni have gone on to study jazz at music academies in Leeds and London.



With its focus on performance and high musical standards, NYJO is delighted to receive numerous invitations for gigs and concerts. Every August, NYJO has a tour, performing numerous gigs as part of the internationally acclaimed Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

NYJO bands rehearsal every Tuesday during term time. Experienced jazz tutors provide high quality, inspirational instruction and encourage shared learning and support amongst players. The band's terrific sound, enthusiasm and professional approach to performances have been highly rated by appreciative audiences, gig organisers and judges at national competitions.

Some past performances by NYJO are captured on video - look for *Notts NYJO* on You Tube. NYJO play a varied repertoire including jazz standards, Big Band classics and jazz

arrangements of pop tunes. In addition, NYJO enjoys performing crossover pieces such as Bernstein's *Prelude, Fugue & Riffs* and collaborations such as with the East of England Singers on Will Todd's *Mass In Blue*. All NYJO players were delighted to be part of the London Cultural Olympics 2012 celebrations in a massed concert with NYO at the Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham

NYJO is honoured to have Nottingham-born legendary saxophonist Tony Kofi as patron - www.tonykofimusic.com Tony provides inspiration and mentoring contributions to NYJO, performing with NYJO on occasions at the Jazzsteps venue Bonington Theatre, Arnold. Also, NYJO is delighted to keep in contact with its alumni including Mark Lewandowski (bass) and Will Glaser (drums) who are studying in London at the Guildhall School of Music and return to Nottingham perform at Jazzsteps gigs.



One of NYJO's first gigs in March 2008 was to entertain concert audiences in the foyer of Nottingham's Royal Concert Hall. The main concert by the Nottingham Youth Orchestra featured jazz concerto premiere commissioned from the late Sir John Dankworth. John was generous in his support for the newly formed NYJO.



The late Sir John Dankworth with NYJO Combo players and Music Director Phil Smith, all in high spirits after a gig. Photo taken in March 2008, soon after the formation of NYJO

The success of NYJO is attributable to a team effort by all its members: players, parents, friends, tutors, patron, sponsors, arts bodies, volunteers (Friends of NYJO) and audiences. NYJO is a charity (part of [NYO](#)) and appreciates the generosity of sponsors including Nottingham-based [Clement Pianos](#) and its valued links with local jazz promoters [Jazzsteps](#), East Midlands Jazz (EMJAZZ) and the education Music Hubs.



Left to Right:

- Ben Lee - Tutor NYJO2 & NYJO Combo (www.bennylee.co.uk)
- Tony Kofi - NYJO Patron (www.tonykofimusic.com)
- Phil Smith - NYJO1 & Musical Director
- Carl Billson - Chair and a founder member of volunteer group *Friends of NYJO*

Phil Smith - NYJO Musical Director

Phil Smith is a talented musician, performance arts educator and long-time promoter of youth jazz in Nottinghamshire. Before forming NYJO as the jazz branch of the Nottingham Youth Orchestra, Phil was instrumental in two prominent Big Bands called *Brassery* and *Brassroots*. Phil's professional skills in the performing arts underpins his passion for taking youth bands to perform at the world famous Edinburgh Fringe Festival and to enjoy the mix of festival entertainments. This tradition from *Brassery* carries through to NYJO. With excellent support from NYJO volunteers, Phil leads a popular annual tour to Edinburgh in August open to members of NYJO1 and NYJO Combo.



Ben Lee - Lead Tutor & Arranger NYJO2 & NYJO Combo

Ben Lee is a talented professional trumpeter with his own band as well as performing in a range of other jazz Big Bands and combos. Also is an educator and accomplished arranger whose unique musical arrangements add to NYJO's unique sound. Ben has also been a long-time collaborator with NYJO's musical director Phil Smith, including Nottingham youth jazz bands *Brassery* and *Brassroots*. Ben is a regular tutor for the NYJO Combo and NYJO 2 development band.

Look out for Ben's band performing locally www.bennylee.co.uk including popular Live Jive dance gigs www.livejive.eu/About.aspx.

A working professional musician with an infectious enthusiasm for jazz, Ben brings a wealth of experience, not least in the entertainment and performance aspects of group playing.

