

SCOTTISH NATIONAL JAZZ ORCHESTRA
FEAT. THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL YOUTH JAZZ ORCHESTRA

CHASIN' THE HORIZON

THE RAILWAY SUITE

Directed by Calum Gourlay

CONCERT PROGRAMME
DECEMBER 2025



Patrons, friends and supporters of the SNJO/SNYJO

To Friends of the Orchestra and to all those who have chosen to donate anonymously – your help has been hugely appreciated, especially at this period of change for both orchestras. We thank you sincerely for your continued support both financially, and as audience members.

We are also deeply indebted to Creative Scotland and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland for their support, and are delighted to welcome The Music Box, Edinburgh College, as our new partner for rehearsal and workshop space. Lastly, we'd like to thank the Murgitroyd Foundation and Rimmers Music for their donation towards our SNYJO Keyboard.



The SNJO (including the SNYJO) is a Scottish charity (SC028653) regulated by the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

**The Scottish National Jazz Orchestra and
Scottish National Youth Jazz Orchestra
present**

Chasin' the Horizon: The Railway Suite

directed by Calum Gourlay

For over a century, jazz musicians travelled the world by train, drawing inspiration from the distinctive rhythms, atmosphere, and romance of the rails. Trains not only provided a means of transport, but also became a powerful symbol of movement, progress, and musical exploration, connecting cities, cultures, and creative minds. The steady pulse of the tracks, the whistle's call, and fleeting landscapes glimpsed from carriage windows all found their way into the sound and spirit of jazz.

This enduring relationship produced some of our genre's most iconic compositions: John Coltrane's *Blue Train*, Glenn Miller's *Chattanooga Choo Choo*, Mary Lou Williams' *Whistle Blues*, and a host of works by Duke Ellington, including *Toot Suite*, *Across the Track Blues*, *Daybreak Express*, and *Take the A Train*—each echoes the rhythm and romance of railway life. These pieces do more than just reflect a mode of travel; they celebrate the cultural and social intersections that the railway enabled, particularly in a time when jazz was evolving as a vibrant expression of identity and resistance.

Today, as climate concerns grow, their legacy gains new relevance. The Scottish National Jazz Orchestra honours this through *The Railway Suite*, blending musical history with a commitment to sustainable touring. It's a tribute to the history of jazz and a journey toward a greener future. At a time when sustainable travel has become an urgent priority, the train emerges once again as a practical and symbolic vehicle.

FRI 5 DEC
ALSO FEAT. THE SNYJO
QUEENS HALL
EDINBURGH

SAT 6 DEC
THE LAIDLAW CENTRE
ST. ANDREWS

SUN 7 DEC
ALSO FEAT. THE SNYJO
ROYAL CONCERT HALL
NEW AUDITORIUM
GLASGOW

Programme

Selection of tunes - listed in alphabetical order but may be subject to change, and will be played as announced from the stage.

Across The Track Blues (*Duke Ellington*) tr. David Berger

Blue Train (*John Coltrane*) arr. Sean Gibbs

Chattanooga Choo Choo (*Glenn Miller*) tr. Myles Collins

Daybreak Express (*Duke Ellington*) tr. Gunther Schuller

Happy Go Lucky Local (*Duke Ellington*) tr. David Berger

Locomotive (*Thelonious Monk*) arr. Kieran McLeod

The Toot Suite (*Duke Ellington & Billy Strayhorn*) tr. David Berger

Whistle Blues (*Mary Lou Williams*)

There will be an interval of 20 minutes

Orchestras

SNJO

Reeds

Martin Kershaw

Harben Kay

Paul Towndrow

Konrad Wiszniewski

Bill Fleming

Trumpets

Mike Lovatt

Tom MacNiven

Sean Gibbs

Lorne Cowieson

Trombones

Kieran McLeod

Aaron Singh

Marcie Boyle

Michael Owers

Piano

Peter Johnstone

Bass

Calum Gourlay

Drums

Alyn Cosker

Vocals

Laura Oghagbon

SNYJO

Reeds

Gavin McWhinnie

Arda Daltaban

Zoe Downs

Jess Koffie

Bill Fleming

Trumpets

Mike Lovatt

Iain McWhinnie

Eva Young

Beth Harby

Trombones

Aaron Singh

Marcie Boyle

Anna Biggart

Michael Owers

Rhythm

Simon Mercieca

Cielo Matta

Thomas Williams

Ashwari Panesar

Finlay Morgan

Vocals

Laura Oghagbon

Calum Gourlay

Artistic Direction/Bass/Arranger

Calum Gourlay was born in Glasgow and developed through Scotland's premier youth jazz programmes, becoming the first bassist selected for the Scottish National Youth Jazz Orchestra (SNYJO) - at age 16. As the only bassist enrolled on the Royal Academy of Music's jazz course in 2004, he graduated with first-class honours in 2008.

Since 2006, Calum has held the acoustic bass chair with the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra. He has been Professor of Jazz Bass at Trinity Laban Conservatoire since 2018.

His debut solo album 'Live at The Ridgeway' (2015) received widespread critical acclaim for its bold format of live, solo performance. His quartet album 'New Ears' (Ubuntu Records, 2019) earned nominations for both a Scottish Jazz Award and an Ivor Novello Composer Award in 2020.



Composers

John Coltrane

John Coltrane (1926–1967) might just be the single greatest creative genius in modern jazz: a figure whose musical legacy is revered by many, and acknowledged by all.

Born in North Carolina, Coltrane rose to prominence as a member of the Miles Davis Quintet, where his intense improvisations and innovative approach attracted widespread attention. In 1957 he recorded *Blue Train* with a powerful sextet, creating a hard-bop masterpiece that became a defining moment in his early career. As his style evolved, he went on to push the boundaries of jazz with his influential albums *Giant Steps*, *A Love Supreme*, and *Ascension*.

Coltrane's playing was marked by spiritual intensity, technical mastery, and constant exploration. His solo work parallels the intense period of civil rights in the United States, and his artistry and life captured—and were captured by—the political consciousness and action of Black Americans during that period.



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.

Mary Lou Williams

Mary Lou Williams (1910–1981) was a pioneering jazz pianist, composer, and arranger whose career spanned the swing, bebop, and modern jazz eras. A child prodigy born in Atlanta and raised in Pittsburgh, she rose to prominence with Andy Kirk’s Twelve Clouds of Joy, becoming one of the most prominent arrangers of the 1930s. Her innovative writing shaped the sound of major bandleaders, and she later mentored bebop pioneers including Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, and Thelonius Monk.

Williams was prolific, credited with over 300 compositions from the genre-blending Zodiac Suite to her many celebrated jazz masses. She devoted her later years to teaching, mentoring young musicians, and spiritual work. Her legacy endures as one of the most creative and visionary voices in jazz.

Thelonius Monk

In the world of jazz, there are few figures as enigmatic and influential as Thelonious Monk (1917-1982). With his unorthodox style, distinctive compositions, and idiosyncratic personality, Monk left an indelible mark on the genre, earning him a place among its most revered icons.

Born in North Carolina and raised in New York City, Monk learned piano by ear and drew inspiration from stride masters such as James P. Johnson and Duke Ellington, as well as the dissonant harmonies of modern classical composers such as Igor Stravinsky. He rose to

prominence in the 1940s as a leading voice in bebop, composing enduring standards such as Round Midnight and Blue Monk.

Monk’s influence extends far beyond jazz; his compositions have inspired musicians across genres, and his recordings remain timeless, reflecting a singular vision and a fearless embrace of individuality.

Glenn Miller

Glenn Miller (1904–1944) led one of the most celebrated orchestras of the 20th century, creating a distinctive sound shaped by his early experiences in various bands. In 1938, with the formation of his second band, he highlighted his reed section, and the unique tone quickly captured audiences. Hits like Tuxedo Junction, In the Mood, and Pennsylvania 6-5000 propelled the band to national fame.

Miller and his orchestra also appeared in popular films, including Sun Valley Serenade (introducing Chattanooga Choo-Choo) and Orchestra Wives (featuring I’ve Got a Gal in Kalamazoo). Alongside singer Ray Eberle, the band recorded enduring standards such as Moonlight Serenade, Stairway to the Stars, and At Last, cementing their place in the American songbook.

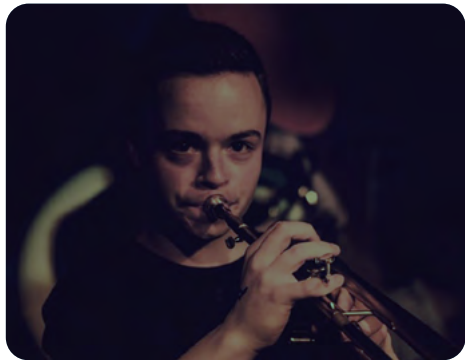
In 1942, Miller left his civilian career to join the Army, transforming the Army Air Force Band into a source of entertainment and morale for troops overseas. Tragically, in 1944, he was lost in a plane crash en route to Paris while preparing for a tour with the band. Miller’s music remains timeless, a symbol of swing and the golden era of big band jazz.



Arrangers

Sean Gibbs

Originally from Edinburgh, Sean is an in-demand trumpeter and composer/arranger on the London jazz scene. He has led his own big band at venues such as Ronnie Scott's, and his album releases have drawn critical acclaim – including



a five star review in BBC Music Magazine and a nomination for Best Album at the Scottish Jazz Awards. Sean's latest big band album Confluence has been selected twice as album of the week on Jazz FM and has exceeded 1.8 million streams on Amazon Music. He also has an upcoming big band EP of his original songs featuring renowned vocalist Frida Touray, known for her work with Lianne La Havas and Jordan Rakei. Other artists Sean performs regularly with include Young Pilgrims, Daniel Casimir and the Calum Gourlay Big Band.

Kieran McLeod

Kieran is a composer, bandleader and current Lead Trombonist with the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra. At the age of 15, Kieran first saw the SNJO performing in his hometown

of Aberdeen and was inspired by the powerful brass section playing the music of Stan Kenton. 8 years later, and coincidentally the next time the band celebrated Kenton, the SNJO invited Kieran to join the trombone section. Since then he has performed regularly with the band, highlights including special guests: Benny Golson, Mike Stern, Branford Marsalis, Bob Mintzer, Dave Leibman, Eddi Reader and Kurt Elling.

As an alumni of the Royal Academy of Music and past winner of the BTS Don Lusher Prize, Kieran enjoys touring globally with Riot Jazz Brass Band, WorldService Project and Young Pilgrims. As a sideman, he has guested with Snarky Puppy, joined Charlie Hunter for a week long tour across the UK and has been a member bands led by stalwarts of the UK Jazz scene including Julian Argüelles, Keith Tippett, Iain Ballamy and most recently Ivo Neame.

His composition work spans jazz, funk, and hip-hop, earning national radio play and critical acclaim at prestigious venues worldwide performed by bands such as Space Ghetto, Patchwork Jazz Orchestra, Nomad Collective and many of his own projects including Human Resource System and New World.



SNJO

The Scottish National Jazz Orchestra (SNJO) is considered by many to be one of Europe's foremost contemporary big bands. The SNJO was established by Tommy Smith in 1995 as a not-for-profit organisation with a crystal-clear artistic vision and core values of versatility, discipline and expression. The SNJO is dedicated to promoting jazz as a pre-eminent art form through performances, original compositions, recordings, and educational outreach programmes. This commitment extends to the task of developing promising young jazz musicians through the ranks of Scottish National Youth Jazz Orchestra. The SNJO

repertoire has included re-imaginings of works by the great, the good and the gigantic, including Weather Report, Herman, Rich, Carter, Strayhorn, Goodman, Kenton, Basie, Gillespie, Mingus, Jaco, Corea, Monk, Metheny, Shorter, Miles and Coltrane. They have also recorded vivid interpretations of Mozart, Prokofiev, Piazzolla, Gershwin and Ellington to rave reviews. The SNJO has built a growing library of original compositions underpinned by a deep understanding and appreciation of improvisation.

snjo.co.uk

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P.S. New Showroom Coming Soon... Early 2026

Future dates for your diary

Scottish National Jazz Orchestra

March 2026

POP! ROCK! SOUL! with Joe Locke and Tommy Blaize

6 Mar	7:30pm	Glasgow	RCS Stevenson Hall
7 Mar	7:30pm	Edinburgh	Usher Hall
8 Mar	7:30pm	Aberdeen	Music Hall

April/May 2026

Two Gils and a Bill: Gil Goldstein celebrates the music of Gil Evans and Bill Evans

30 Apr	7:30pm	Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall, New Auditorium
1 May	7:30pm	Edinburgh	Queen's Hall
2 May	7:30pm	Dundee	Rep Theatre

Scottish National Youth Jazz Orchestra

14 Feb	Kilmarnock	Centrestage Theatre
15 Feb	Cumbernauld	Cumbernauld Theatre
28 Mar	Dollar	Dollar Academy, Gibson Hall
29 Mar	Giffnock	Eastwood Park Theatre
16 May	Greenock	Beacon Arts Centre
17 May	Pitlochry	Pitlochry Theatre

Info and tickets:
snjo.co.uk/concerts

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If you have enjoyed tonight's concert, why not consider becoming a friend? You can join at snjo.co.uk/friends or by scanning the QR Code.

We look forward to welcoming you.



snjo.co.uk/friends

SNJO audience survey

We would love to understand our audience better and to hear your feedback about tonight's concert and beyond. To take part in our short survey, visit snjo.co.uk/survey or scan the QR code.

It only takes 5 minutes.



snjo.co.uk/survey

SCOTTISH NATIONAL JAZZ ORCHESTRA



**POP!
ROCK!
SOUL!**

**FEATURING
JOE LOCKE
AND TOMMY BLAIZE**

6 MARCH GLASGOW RCS STEVENSON HALL
7 MARCH EDINBURGH USHER HALL
8 MARCH ABERDEEN MUSIC HALL

Singer-songwriters such as **Stevie Wonder**, **Joni Mitchell**, **The Beatles**, **Bill Withers** and **Stevie Nicks** brought heartfelt soul to their work, while artists and performers like **The Isley Brothers**, **Led Zeppelin**, **Steely Dan** and **Earth Wind & Fire** showered their enduring recordings with jazz, funk, orchestral and eclectic ornamentation.