

# Local ensembles perform alongside starry international guests as The Cumnock Tryst celebrates 10th Birthday Festival



22th April 2024

Download Images [here](#)

## **The Cumnock Tryst: A meeting place for music Wednesday 2 – Sunday 6 October 2024 Founder and Artistic Director, Sir James MacMillan**

*“If anything deserves the epithet “making change through music”, it’s the Cumnock Tryst” - The Observer*

The Cumnock Tryst marks its 10th birthday in 2024, with world-renowned talent sitting alongside local musicians in a bumper celebration of what making music is all about. This year the festival adds an extra date, running from **Wednesday 2 – Sunday 6 October**.

Across the five days, the festival will welcome some of classical music’s finest performers to East Ayrshire, including pianist Steven Osborne, the Maxwell Quartet, the Gesualdo Six, Joshua Ellicott, and the Tommy Smith Youth Jazz Orchestra. Local favourites return too, and the newly formed Cumnock Tryst Ensemble make their debut.



The festival was founded by world-renowned Scottish composer Sir James MacMillan who grew up in Cumnock, a town still working towards its post-coal identity. Taking inspiration from models such as Peter Maxwell Davies' St Magnus Festival in Orkney and Benjamin Britten's Aldeburgh initiative, The Cumnock Tryst has established itself as a festival for and of its local community.

*"Having grown up and attended schools in Cumnock, becoming a musician here with the encouragement and participation of family, friends, relatives and teachers, I knew that an ambitious festival of music could work here. And so, it has proved."* James MacMillan

Beyond the 5 day festival in October The Tryst continues its year-round work in the local community, and this year also sees the inaugural International Summer School for Composers – an opportunity for young composers from across the globe to come to East Ayrshire and work alongside Sir James MacMillan and Anna Thorvaldsdottir.

This Tenth year marks a moment of celebration and reflection for the Tryst. Sir James said:

*"It has been a delight and joy not just to bring a flowering of musical riches to my hometown but to work closely (and with determination) with so many people in the community. With them we are bringing our musical dreams to fruition."*

*As always, it's a huge pleasure to welcome performers of the highest calibre to East Ayrshire, and I'm particularly thrilled that the newly formed Cumnock Tryst Ensemble will make its debut this year. Scotland has, over the years, produced some excellent chamber groups and it is with immense pride and excitement that I have been able to bring about the creation of a brand new one.*

*So, this tenth year is a moment of celebration for The Cumnock Tryst but it is also a moment of reflection too, when we take stock and look excitedly into the future – and to the next ten years."*

### Programme Information

Performing the opening recital of the festival is pianist **Steven Osborne OBE**, one of Britain's most treasured musicians. Publicly and critically acclaimed, his programme is a delightful journey covering a diverse range of music from Bach to Judith Weir, and some jazz to round it all off (Wednesday 2 October, Trinity Church).

A whole day of performances takes place on Thursday 3 October, beginning with **Music of Land Reclamation** – the culmination of a composition project for Higher and Advanced Higher Music students at Robert Burns Academy. In a project led by Sir James MacMillan and Ayrshire composer Gillian Walker, the composers have responded to photographs of the local area from photographer Simon Butterworth's series *Abstract Excavationism: The Art of Industrial Land Reclamation* (Thursday 3 October, Barony Campus).

At Trinity Church, British tenor **Joshua Ellicott** makes his Cumnock Tryst debut in an eternally memorable song recital. With an international career that has taken him to the top concert halls of the world with some of the finest artists of this generation, Ellicott's voice is famously sweet-toned, flexible and powerful. For this special recital he brings a mixed programme of Bach, Schubert, Schumann and Benjamin Britten (Thursday 3 October, Trinity Church).

Thursday finishes on an upbeat note, with guitarist, flautist and singer **Seán Gray** performing in the Festival Club in Dumfries Arms Hotel. From the village Coylton in Ayrshire, Seán has performed with the award-winning Paul McKenna Band of which The New York Times wrote "The best folk band to have come out of Scotland in the last twenty years" (Thursday 3 October, Dumfries Arms Hotel).

On Friday morning, young pupils from Hillside School reach new creative heights in **The Unbroken Thread**. Over the years The Tryst has developed a number of ground-breaking music projects for children and adults with additional support needs, and this year James MacMillan has been working in Hillside School and the nearby Riverside Centre alongside **Drake Music Scotland** and the **Hebrides Ensemble**. With the belief that disability should never be a barrier to a deeply engaging involvement with music, this concert follows a series of creative workshops where all involved devised their own music and modes of expression (Friday 4 October, Barony Campus).

A regular feature of the festival, The Cumnock Hour returns with Genesis Conversations in collaboration with the Genesis Foundation in London and sister festival Boswell Book Festival. This special panel discussion addresses key issues relating to the cultural sector and hopes to create greater awareness of the role that the arts can play in rural regeneration. The renowned Scottish journalist Iain Macwhirter leads the prestigious panel of experts in discussion before opening up a Q&A session with the audience (Friday 4 October, Dumfries Arms Hotel).

Set to be a festival highlight, one of Britain's finest young string quartets the **Maxwell Quartet** present two of the greatest quartets from the classical repertoire in Cumnock Old Church. Hailed as 'brilliantly fresh, unexpected and exhilarating' by The Herald, they formed originally as four close friends and have since established a reputation across the globe. They bring Mozart's String Quartet No.16 and Mendelssohn's String Quartet in F Minor to the Tryst (Friday 4 October, Cumnock Old Church).

**The Euan Stevenson Trio** close the evening in the Festival Club, taking audiences on a jazz journey from Ellington to Evans. Scottish composer, pianist and songwriter, Euan Stevenson is a greatly admired performer whose music has featured in films and on TV. Joined by his top class, swinging trio (Andrew Sharkey on double bass and Tom Gordon on drums), he pays homage to the styles and techniques of jazz piano icons Duke Ellington, Errol Garner, Oscar Peterson, George Shearing, Ahmad Jamal and Bill Evans (Friday 4 October, Dumfries Arms Hotel).

Saturday's fun begins with a showcase from **CAMPS** – formerly known as Cumnock Area Musical Production Society and now as Cumnock Arts Makes People Smile. Having operated in the Cumnock area for years they stage a number of shows annually, including the much-anticipated Christmas pantomime. At this short, relaxed but special morning concert we will see a showcase of their current work accompanied by a special band of musicians (Saturday 5 October, Boswell Centre).

The future of Scottish jazz is in safe hands with **Tommy Smith's Youth Jazz Orchestra** who perform in Dumfries Arms Hotel on Saturday afternoon. Having celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2023 with a series of stunning concerts, these young talents play a repertoire of jazz classics under the direction of Scotland's most distinguished jazz musician Tommy Smith (Saturday 5 October, Dumfries Arms Hotel).

Saturday evening sees **The Cumnock Tryst Tenth Birthday Gala Concert: All the Hills and Vales Along**, with local ensembles coming together with starry international visitors for a birthday celebration of brass, strings and mighty voices. The main work in this concert is *All the Hills and Vales Along*, an oratorio which James MacMillan composed for the 2018 festival to mark the centenary of the WW1 Armistice. Scottish emerging composers Gillian Walker and Erin Thomson will hear the world premieres of their recent Tryst commissions, the Maxwell Quartet perform some of their distinctive Scottish folk music arrangements and the Dalmellington Band kick it all off in a similarly traditional fashion. The Festival Chorus will also be joined by young singers from the RCS and guest performer Joshua Ellicott in this festival highlight (Saturday 5 October, Barony Campus).

Ayrshire fiddler **Alastair Savage and Friends** bring the best of Scotland's music to Cumnock's doorstep on Saturday night at the Festival Club. Originally from Ardrossan in North Ayrshire, Alastair has performed all over the world both as a traditional and classical player, notably as a member of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. He'll be joined by Euan Drysdale (guitar/piano), Iain Crawford (double bass), and Chris Gibbs (border pipes) (Saturday 5 October, Dumfries Arms Hotel).

This year, the Sunday **Festival Service** is hosted by Mauchline Parish Church, with music led by one of the world's finest choral ensembles **The Gesualdo Six**. An important moment in the festival, the annual Service allows a vital spiritual reflection at the heart of musical celebrations.

The newly formed **Cumnock Tryst Ensemble** make their official debut during the festival on Sunday 6th October. This new chamber group is directed by cellist Christian Elliott and consists of some of Scotland's finest musicians who have had an association with The Tryst over the last 10 years. Determined to make Cumnock a significant centre and generator for music-making of the highest order, the ensemble will have a commitment to the local community and a special focus on composers of our own era. The ensemble will give performances, in Cumnock and elsewhere, and will participate in many of the community and education projects spearheaded by The Tryst. This inaugural recital is a clear example of Christian Elliott's vision and intentions, including music by Olivier Messiaen, Elliot Carter, Rebecca Clarke, James MacMillan and Frank Bridge (Sunday 6 October, Dumfries House).

Weavers of rich aural tapestries, **The Gesualdo Six** present **Queen of Hearts**, a selection of Motets and Chansons from the French Court focusing on European Queens: Anne of Brittany, Marguerite d'Austria, Anne Boleyn and Mary Tudor. The programme will also include new works, setting Renaissance French poetry by director Owain Parks and Ninfea Crutwell-Reade, specially commissioned by The Gesualdo Six (Sunday 6 October, St John's Church).

Tickets for the 2024 festival are on sale on Monday 29th April via [www.thecumnocktryst.com](http://www.thecumnocktryst.com) with priority booking for Friends and Patrons from 22nd April.