

John Rae's Celtic Roots

Award-winning musician and composer John Rae blends music from his Scottish heritage with contemporary jazz, including acoustic renditions of pieces like Robert Burns' Banks and Braes (named "track of the year" by RNZ Concert's Nick Tipping) and original compositions by Rae. This special concert will showcase his mastery of both tradition and innovation, offering a journey through Scotland's landscapes and New York's vibrant jazz scene.

Programme

John Rae, *Drums*

Jack Harris, *Bass*

Ben Wilcock, *Piano*

Oscar Lavën, *Saxophone*

The Earl of Seaforth

Jock and Sioux

Freddy's Tune

Barry Gadjie

I'm Waulking

Ye Banks and Braes

Psalm (Peerie Cruicky)

Uncouth and Without Form

Mo run geal òg

This concert is approximately 60-70 minutes of music. Can be performed as one set or split to include an interval.

Artist biographies

John Rae is a jazz drummer and award winning composer based in Pōneke, Wellington. In 2009/10 he was the Creative New Zealand/Jack C. Richards composer-in-residence at Victoria University Wellington, New Zealand. John recorded his first album at the age of sixteen with the Scottish saxophonist Tommy Smith and has subsequently recorded over 70 albums both as a leader and side man, including two BBC Jazz Albums of the Year. Awarded a 'Herald Angel Award' at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and leader and composer for the New Zealand jazz group, The Troubles. From 2000-3 drummer for the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra and has performed and recorded with many world renowned jazz musicians including Ethan Iverson, Vijay Iyer and Mike Nock. Originally from Scotland, John has been a New Zealand citizen since 2016.

Oscar Lavën is a highly versatile and dynamic multi-instrumentalist, composer, arranger, and bandleader based in Pōneke, Wellington. Known for his adaptability and expressive style, Oscar's performance career spans a remarkable array of genres, with particular depth in jazz and classical music. His impressive musicianship has led to numerous recordings, accolades, and collaborations across New Zealand's music landscape and beyond. Oscar has had the privilege of performing with iconic musicians, including renowned drummers Steve Gadd and Dave Weckl, as well as contributing to the celebrated New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. His talent has also been recognized internationally, performing with John Beasley's Grammy-winning MONK'estra and the legendary Rodger Fox Big Band. With each performance, Oscar brings his unique voice and creative flair, establishing himself as a powerful and influential figure in the New Zealand music scene.

Ben Wilcock is a celebrated pianist and composer hailing from Hamilton and now based in Rotorua, New Zealand. Known for his versatile and expressive style, Ben's musical journey began as the on-stage pianist for the acclaimed theatrical production The Pickle King by Indian Ink Theatre Company.

This show garnered widespread recognition, winning multiple awards, including the prestigious Fringe First at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Following his early success, Ben spent several years in the UK, where he continued to refine his craft before returning to New Zealand. Upon his return, he became an integral part of the national music scene, performing and recording with acclaimed vocalist Bella Kalolo on her albums *Without the Paper* and *Time and Space*. His collaborations with Kalolo led to performances at high-profile festivals and venues worldwide, including Glastonbury, Java Jazz, the Sydney Arts Festival, and prominent New York spots like Ella Lounge and Rockwood Music Hall. Throughout his career, Ben has shared the stage with a range of distinguished artists, including Aaradhna and Louis Baker, and more recently with American blues legend Chris Cain. Ben's vibrant style and deep-rooted passion for jazz and blues continue to captivate audiences, establishing him as one of New Zealand's most dynamic and respected pianists.

Jack Harris is a rising star on the New Zealand jazz scene, bringing his dynamic acoustic bass playing to stages across Pōneke, Wellington, and beyond. As part of the award-winning jazz ensemble Mel Stevenson, Jack has already made a name for himself as a member of New Zealand's remarkable new generation of jazz talent. His accolades from national jazz competitions are numerous, reflecting his skill, dedication, and the respect he has earned from peers and audiences alike. Now in his final year at The New Zealand School of Music-Te Kōkī, Jack is not only honing his craft but has also become one of Wellington's most sought-after musicians. His versatility, depth of expression, and musical intuition have already established him as a prominent figure in the local music scene and a promising talent to watch in the future of jazz.