

NYOS Jazz Orchestra, Cottiers Theatre, 16th July 2015

Cottiers Theatre became the church of jazz on Thursday as NYJOS's annual summer tour brought the young musicians together with that most beguiling of saxophonists, Iain Ballamy in this former place of worship. A founding member of 1980s big band Loose Tubes, who are currently undergoing a second coming, Ballamy has often conveyed a flavour of devotional music in his writing and if this was particularly apparent in the melodies he actually transcribed from praise singers in India, it was also a recurring phenomenon throughout the two sets.

NYJOS's co-artistic director Malcolm Edmonstone arranged pieces from across Ballamy's career and did a superb job, capturing the music's character while expanding the tonal palette. Indeed the introduction might have done credit to the great Vince Mendoza and the NYJOS players - although the sound quality took some time to settle - met the challenge of playing with control as well as exuberance with considerable aplomb.

All Men Amen, which maintained the essence of Ballamy's original pairing of his tenor with Django Bates' E flat horn, with its purring, Morse Code-like backdrop, highlighted the guest soloist's ability to express much with few notes, and there was fine playing from Fergus McCreadie, one of two splendid pianist-keyboardists, and the trumpet section operating in relay.

It seems unfair to single out individual contributions in such a measured ensemble effort but drummer Tom Potter's very musical solo and Oliver Eve and Harry Weir's three-way saxophone exchange with Ballamy were worth special mention in a performance that again highlighted the fine work Edmonstone and his fellow director, Andrew Bain, are doing.

Rob Adams, The Herald Scotland, 17th July 2015