

ACADEMY JAZZ ORCHESTRA WITH LEON FOSTER THOMAS: EXPRESSIONS OF CARIBBEAN JAZZ

CONDUCTED BY NICK SMART

LEON FOSTER THOMAS – STEEL PAN

WEDNESDAY 03 FEBRUARY, 7.30PM
SUSIE SAINSBURY THEATRE



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All compositions and arrangements by
Leon Foster Thomas.

Midnight Refrain
Cry of Hope
Bliss
Lost Tongues of Patois
Dance of David
Bois
Ascension
Zone of Peace
To Swing or Not to Swing

Performers

Flute

Kiera Chakraborty

Trumpets

Charlie Ballamy
George Hilliam
Iacopo Teolis
Theo Abbt
Klara Devlin

Saxophones

Joe Bazalgette
Zach Sholapurkar
George Johnson
Toby Evans
Noah Chiari

Trombones

Mateo Jaekel
Ismael Aasgaard
Benjamin Krauss
Alfie Bousfield

Guitar

Manuel Humaran
Alfie Dean

Piano

Wisdom Udensi
John Haslam

Bass

Herbie Rees
Zaki Osahn

Drums

Oscar Williams

Biographies

Leon Foster Thomas

Leon Foster Thomas is a gifted international jazz musician and steel pan virtuoso. His music is a blend of his Caribbean roots with the harmonic and improvisational complexities of jazz, creating a lively and eclectic meld all his own.

Winner of the World Steelband Music Festival's Soloist and Duet competitions in 2002 and 2004, critics laud him as "the next big thing on his instrument", "...an enthralling improviser..." (All About Jazz); "...masterful with impeccable musicianship" (When Steel Talks); and "a benevolent wizard" (Venice Magazine).

Leon's deft and ambitious command of the steel pan has transcended beyond the instrument's novel stereotype to being featured at world stages such as New York's Jazz at Lincoln Center, Adrienne Arsht Center of the Performing Arts (Miami), Moscow International House of Music, Jacksonville Jazz Festival, Perm International Jazz Festival (Russia), Miami Downtown Jazz Festival, International Festival of Contemporary Culture (Kazakhstan), and Pittsburgh Jazz Live International Festival. He has also worked with artists such as: Hugh Masekela, Randy Brecker, John Daversa, Sammy Figueroa, Vince Mendoza, Richard Smallwood, Ky-Mani Marley, Len "Boogsie" Sharpe, Dolly Parton, Igor Butman, John Beasley, and many more.

Having two well-received solo albums under his belt, his latest release, *Metamorphosis*, on Ropeadope Records, exemplifies his growth and maturation as a musician. Honing his in-depth talents as a musical storyteller, Leon has produced an album which perfectly illustrates his transformative journey.

Leon has a Bachelor of Music degree from Florida Memorial University and a Master of Music degree at Florida International University. He continues to perform at festivals and concerts around the world, as well as conducting lectures and master classes at various educational and cultural institutions.

Nick Smart

Head of Jazz at the Royal Academy of Music, Nick Smart is an internationally renowned jazz educator, trumpeter and conductor who has given guest masterclasses and performances around the world. Nick has performed alongside some of the leading names in jazz and was a member of the late Kenny Wheeler's Big Band with whom he had a long association and co-authored Wheeler's biography. Most recently he has been playing in the last quartet of saxophonist Stan Sulzmann on the album "Shadow Painting". He has also performed and recorded internationally as the regular soloist with the famous "JTB". He has released three albums as a leader to critical acclaim, including his debut "Remembering Nick Drake" which was described by Straight No Chaser

magazine as "...a future classic because it really captures all that is best about British jazz....".

He has been equally in demand as both educator and musical director and led projects with big bands all over the world, including as guest director of Big Band projects at Manhattan School of Music, New England Conservatory, the Jazz Institute Berlin, Sydney Conservatory, and as a guest director of the Grahamstown Festival Big Band in South Africa. At home he has conducted the Stan Sulzmann "Neon Orchestra", the award winning Troyka large ensemble, "Troykestra", the Gareth Lockrane Big Band, the Julian Siegel Jazz Orchestra and orchestral projects with JTQ. In 2013 Nick was awarded the Parliamentary Jazz Award for Jazz Education, in 2015 awarded Honorary Membership of the Royal Academy of Music, and in 2022 as well as completing his PhD at the Academy he was conferred with Professorship from the University of London.