

# TOMMY SMITH MODERN JACOBITE THE BBC SCOTTISH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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**Tommy Smith (tenor saxophone)/BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra (BBCSSO)**  
conducted by **Clark Rundell** with orchestrations by Smith.

Recorded on **28th and 29th May 2015** at **City Halls, Glasgow**.  
Mixed on 25th and 26th October at Rainbow Studios in Oslo by Jan Erik Kongshaug.

Leading European jazz saxophonist, composer and educator Tommy Smith boldly breaks new ground with the BBC/SSO on **Modern Jacobite**, an exceptional recording featuring his new symphonic work 'Jacobite', alongside personal re-imaginings of Rachmaninoff and Chick Corea.

**Modern Jacobite** represents a first foray into symphonic music for jazz saxophonist Tommy Smith, who has long interleaved orchestral discipline with creative jazz.

The centrepiece of this striking album is an evocative painting in music, 'Jacobite'. Tommy Smith composed this ambitious symphonic piece for saxophone and orchestra, and it is deeply imbued with dramatic tension, extraordinary beauty and inflamed passion. 'Jacobite' is also musically inventive and finely balanced as an intricate structure, an articulate narrative and an exceptionally visceral piece of original music.

The CD opens with a shimmering interpretation of Rachmaninoff's 'Vocalise', in which Smith's saxophone emotes a range of complex feelings in a devastatingly romantic orchestration. "Vocalise" is among the best loved of the composer's famous 'Fourteen Songs', and Smith brings the subtlest nuances of improvisation to bear upon its melodic richness.

The third element is a portmanteau of compositions ostensibly by Chick Corea, entitled simply, 'Children's Songs'. It consists of Corea's original tunes alternating with Smith's re-imaginings of Corea's childhood memoirs. These variations are delivered with improvisational verve, and linked by the connective tissue of new music composed by Tommy Smith.

The journey towards the making of this record first began in January 2015 with a suggestion from the BBC/SSO for a remarkable collaboration that has now resulted in the musical energy of 'Jacobite'. Following discussions, Smith immediately embarked upon a feverish period of writing and orchestrating that continued unabated until the recording dates in May of that year.

Keen listeners may detect elements of Scottish folk melody as one of several points of departure in this dynamic and highly organized work. Tommy Smith uses every part of the orchestra to tell his story, and colours his composition with delicate touches of inventive improvisation. However, his overarching aim with 'Jacobite' was to conceive of something subtle, organic and expressive.

*"Jacobite" is a piece of modern music that features saxophone and many other soloists in the orchestra, so it's quite unconventional", explains Smith. "It's certainly not a full blown concerto, especially when the first entrance of the saxophone appears after two and a half minutes of orchestral texture and solos from cello and flute. The saxophone acts as the main narrator throughout the piece, that speaks to all the thematic material."*

The outcome is a high watermark in the accomplished career of one of the Europe's leading jazz musicians. It is also a welcome addition to the growing repertoire of modern musical works that blur distinctions, and break down barriers to musical understanding. For more information about the CD or to obtain a physical/digital copy of **'Modern Jacobite': Tommy Smith/BBCSSO**, please follow the links below.

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The origins of this record first began for Tommy Smith in 1989, when he was asked to perform William Sweeney's concerto for saxophone, *An rathad ûr*, with the BBC/SSO for the television series *Jazz Types*, which Smith also presented.

Smith was immediately prompted by Roger Pollen of the Scottish Ensemble (SE) to spend six months studying orchestration, with a new commission for saxophone and strings very much in mind. As a *Blue Note* artist at the time, Smith had access to the parent company EMI's entire classical catalogue, and had the pick of CD's from the London office. He also researched orchestration texts by Samuel Adler, Rimsky Korsakov and Cecil Forsyth, and spent two productive years in Paris where he studied classical music and worked alongside Daniel Humair.

Tommy Smith wrote his first piece of classical music, *Unirsi In Matrimonio*, for saxophone and strings in 1990. It was met with general critical approval, and praise in particular from respected critic Michael Tumelty who wrote in the Glasgow Herald, "The movements work as mood pictures, full of atmosphere and outbursts of drama".

This was quickly followed by another work for strings and saxophone, *Un Ecossais A Paris* in 1991, and he later collaborated very closely with eclectic classical pianist Murray McLaughlin for *Sonata No.1 - Hall of Mirrors* and *Sonata No.2 Dreaming with Open Eyes*, both for saxophone and piano. His piano/saxophone duo recordings with McLaughlin of these works moved one writer to observe that they were, "Powerful yet lyrical works...they offer opportunities for improvisation, and Smith employs a jazzman's expressive tone to haunting and thrilling effect." - Inverness Courier, (August 1, 1999)

The next seven years were spent building the forces necessary for a much bigger orchestral work, which came in the form of the saxophone concerto *Hiroshima* (1998). This was premiered with the Orchestra of St. John Smith's Square at Chelmsford Cathedral, and included strings, brass, woodwinds, percussion, piano and saxophone.

Tommy Smith also appeared as solo saxophonist for Sally Beamish's *The Knotgrass Elegy*, commissioned for the 2001 BBC Proms, and performed with the BBC Symphony Orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall in London. Fiona Maddocks writing in the *Guardian* commented that, "*The saxophonist Tommy Smith, holding all together with his eloquent wizardry, brought the piece to a wistful close with a forlorn meditation.*"

In 2002, Tommy Smith performed his earlier, and much lengthier re-invention of 'Children's Songs' for saxophone and orchestra with the Scottish Ensemble at St John's Kirk, Perth. The Glasgow Herald remarked at the time that, "*It transcends technical and stylistic barriers between written and improvised music, resulting in a composition that preserves absolutely the character of the originals*".

Other classical music endeavours have included a massive undertaking for the Edinburgh Youth Orchestra's 40th anniversary in 2003. A very special suite, entitled *Edinburgh*, was specially written for the occasion, and featured saxophone, bass and drums, accompanied by a one hundred-strong symphony orchestra. The work toured Scotland, Estonia, Russia, and Finland.

Smith also featured as a soloist with the BBC/SSO for the 2012 BBC Proms Last Night Celebrations in Scotland at Glasgow's City Halls. His contribution alongside pianist Joanna MacGregor and soprano Carolyn Sampson, under the baton of conductor Stephen Bell, marked a memorable final night at the world's most celebrated classical music festival.

*Tommy Smith is founder/director of The Scottish National Jazz Orchestra, founder/director of the Scottish National Youth Jazz Orchestra, and Head of Jazz at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.*



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