

**THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL
JAZZ ORCHESTRA**
DIRECTED BY TOMMY SMITH

WORLD OF THE GODS

with the
Mugenkyo Taiko Drummers

MAY 2023



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL



WORLD OF THE GODS

The World of the Gods, composed by Tommy Smith, marks the reunion of the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra with the Mugenkyo Taiko Drummers for an evening of brilliant musicianship and breath-taking physical energy.

When ancient meets modern and vibrant orchestral sounds encounter a musical tradition more than 2000 years old. Yet, there is common ground between them. Described as “a truly imaginative work that dances in both the physical and musical sense”, The World of the Gods embraces experimentation, extrapolation and improvisation that is “powerful, vibrant and atmospheric”.

In partnership with **Beacon Arts Centre** and **Perth Festival of the Arts**.

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If you enjoyed tonight's concert, please do consider becoming a “Friend of the SNJO” and help support the future of our orchestras and that of jazz in Scotland. We welcome new friends at any time.

If you would like to know more about our memberships, please contact Catherine Gillespie:
phone +44 7446 286412
email cg@snjo.co.uk

We would also like to encourage everyone to please sign up for our email updates at snjo.co.uk/news



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We would like to extend special thanks to our main sponsors, **Creative Scotland** and the **Royal Conservatoire of Scotland** for their continued support of the orchestras.

PROGRAMME NOTES

Drums and drumming are universal. On every continent, drums have been used historically for communication, to declare intentions of war, to celebrate peace. In Japan, two thousand years ago and more, as they were elsewhere, drums were also beaten to ward off evil spirits, to encourage crops to grow, to try and influence the weather, and to celebrate and pay homage to the gods.

Centuries later, drums became part of the court music of the Imperial Palace and drumming became not just a skill but an artform that required years of training. The word taiko, which literally translates as “drum,” took on a new meaning as drumming influenced cultural developments such as the Noh play.

Today, taiko is a global phenomenon with drumming troupes across America, Europe and Australia as well as in Japan. Its practitioners study seriously to perfect its power and subtlety, to build the strength and endurance it takes to create the sounds of thunder and to make and sustain the moves involved in its ritualised choreography.

These were the qualities that impressed Scottish National Jazz Orchestra founder and musical director, Tommy Smith as he watched a television documentary about taiko. Always looking for possibilities for collaboration, Tommy's first thought was, where would I find the drummers who could bring taiko into the orchestra's orbit?

Assuming the answer to be Japan, Tommy was surprised to find that Europe's only professional taiko troupe was based in Scotland. He was even more taken aback, after he'd been in touch and arranged to meet them in Glasgow, that the Mugenkyo Taiko Drummers had their dojo – or rehearsal

space – five miles from his house in the Lanarkshire countryside.

After arranging for the SNJO's own master drummer, Alyn Cosker, to get together with Mugenkyo and make sure they could work together, Tommy composed World of the Gods. A series of ten pieces that draw on Japanese folk melodies, this work showcases Mugenkyo's percussive music and movement alongside jazz harmony and improvisation. It also highlights the delicacy that Tommy marvelled at in that documentary and it created an unforgettable experience when it premiered in 2010. It toured successfully in England the following year and is a work that Tommy has wanted to return to ever since.

Although the art forms they espouse originated on opposite sides of the world, the SNJO and Mugenkyo have found a common spirit. The two ensembles are not so far apart in age. When the SNJO was formed in 1995, Mugenkyo were in their infancy but on the way to giving over 1000 concerts. They have taken their thrilling and energetic performances across the UK, Japan & Europe, appearing at venues including the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, at events including Glastonbury and Cork Jazz Festivals, and in prime-time television programmes including the Brit Awards and the Last Night of the Proms.

Tonight, the SNJO and Mugenkyo converge again. World of the Gods will, promises Tommy, bring the thunder. It will also suggest the sweet fragrance of cherry blossoms and many emotions and impressions in between. It's an orchestral jazz performance like no other, so sit back and enjoy the spectacle.

© Rob Adams

PROGRAMME

Music by Tommy Smith

GODDESS OF DAWN & REVELRY | Ame-no-Uzume 天鈿女命
Commonly called Uzume, she is instrumental to the “missing sun legend” in Shinto. She is also known as The Great Persuader and The Heavenly Alarming Female.

GOD OF THE MOON | Tsukuyomi-no-Mikoto 月読の命
Tsukuyomi-no-Mikoto killed the goddess of food, Uke Mochi, in disgust at the way she had prepared a meal. As a result, Amaterasu never faced him again, causing the sun and moon to be in different parts of the sky.

GOD OF FIRE | Kagutsuchi-no-Kami 迦具土の神
After Kagu-tsuchi's birth burned his mother to death, his father, in his grief, beheaded Kagu-tsuchi with his sword and cut his body into eight pieces, which became eight volcanoes.

GOD OF THE WIND | Fujin 風神
Also known as Kami-no-Kaze, he is one of the oldest Shinto gods, said to be present at the creation of the world. He is often depicted as an oni – a demon, ogre or troll – with a bag slung over his back.

GOD OF STORMS | Susanoo-no-Mikoto 須佐之男命
Also known as Susano-o, Susa-no-o, and Susanowo, he was responsible for the slaying of the monster Yamata-no-Orochi and the subsequent discovery of the sacred sword Kusanagi.

THE UNDERWORLD | Yomi 黄泉
Yomi is the Japanese word for the underworld where horrible creatures guard the exits and where the dead go to rot indefinitely. After its ruler, Izanami's retreat there, Izanagi followed her in and upon his return he washed himself, creating Amaterasu, Susanoo and Tsukuyomi in the process.

GOD OF THE SEA | Ryujin 龍神
A dragon able to transform into human shape, Ryujin lived under the ocean in a palace of red and white coral, from where he controlled the tides with magical jewels.

GODDESS OF THE SUN | Amaterasu-O-Mi-Kami 天照大神
Commonly called Amaterasu, she is the purported ancestress of the Imperial Household of Japan and her full name means “Great Goddess” or “Great Spirit Who Shines in the Heavens”.

GOD OF WAR | Hachiman 八幡神
Also known as Hachiman-shin or Yawata no Kami, he is the divine protector of Japan and its people.

GOD OF THUNDER & LIGHTNING | Raijin 雷神
Raijin's name is derived from the Japanese words for thunder (rai) and god (shin) and he is typically depicted as a demon beating drums to create thunder.

Mugenkyo are Europe's longest-established Taiko drumming group, renowned for their energetic & theatrical modern style based on traditional Japanese drumming. Their performance history includes 1,000s of concerts at prestigious venues throughout the UK, including in Scotland: Edinburgh Usher Hall, Glasgow Kings Theatre, Dundee Caird Hall, Aberdeen Music Hall, and Inverness Eden Court.

Through the years Mugenkyo have been featured on various film, TV and recording projects. Recently they were invited to film for the upcoming blockbuster "Tin Soldier" alongside Jamie Foxx & Robert De Niro, performed a 2-week run at the World Expo in Dubai, and were featured for the BBC TV Tokyo Olympics as the opening big drum sequence. In 2002 they opened the UK's first Taiko Drumming Centre, based right here in central Scotland, from where they run residential weekend workshops, and regular classes.

Neil Mackie. Founding member of Mugenkyo, trained in Japan with Masaaki Kurumaya Sensei from 1992 to 1994, returning to the UK in 1994 to form Mugenkyo Taiko Drummers, bringing in his experience as a kit drummer in hometown Bristol and in London.



Miyuki Williams. Co-founder of Mugenkyo, also trained in Japan under Kurumaya Sensei. Born of a Japanese mother and Welsh father, as a child Miyuki studied the piano and Nihon Buyo classical Japanese dance, which has influenced her playing style.



Edina Nagy. Originally from Budapest, Edina has been performing with the group for 8 years, featuring on theatre tours of the UK, and projects in Australia, Lebanon, Greece, Portugal, United Arab Emirates, among others. She is also the resident costume designer, graphic designer & video editor for Mugenkyo.



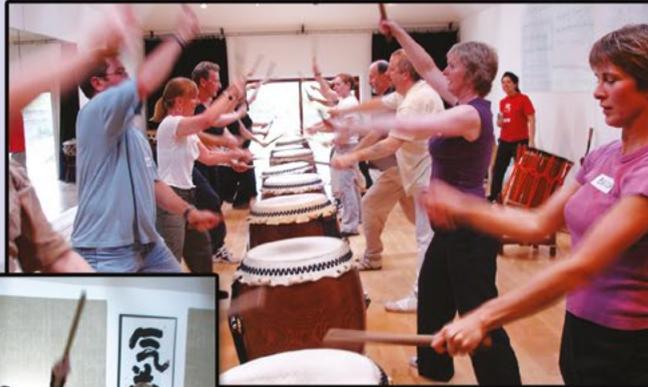
LEARN TO PLAY TAIKO with MUGENKYO TAIKO DRUMMERS

RESIDENTIAL WEEKEND WORKSHOPS

Experience the world of taiko at the Mugen Taiko Dojo, the UK's premier taiko training centre based in rural Scotland, and the home of Mugenkyo Taiko Drummers.

A unique opportunity to learn to play on these beautifully crafted traditional instruments, guided by highly experienced instructors.

The introductory weekend workshop starts with the basics of taiko & is suitable for adults of all levels of ability & fitness - all are welcome.



PARTICIPANT COMMENTS:

".. the life-affirming exhilaration of a residential workshop at the Dojo... one of the most fantastic experiences I have ever had the privilege of taking part in. I have been on a perpetual high since I came back from the weekend."

"..stirred, excited and energised by the pure energy and vitality that was generated and flowed freely, emanating primarily from yourselves & caught infectiously by us all."

WEEKLY CLASSES in LANARKSHIRE GLASGOW & EDINBURGH

We run ongoing weekly classes and taster sessions at our bases in Glasgow & Edinburgh & at the Dojo itself near Strathaven. Courses begin with the basics, from the stance, bachi drumstick grip, through to learning a full performance piece. There is also an opportunity to progress to higher level courses, join our more intensive training groups, and join our Dojo performance team.

info@taiko.co.uk // 01357 522 008

TOMMY SMITH

Born in Edinburgh in 1967, Smith began his prolific career at 14 when his quartet won Best Band, and he received the Best Musician Trophy at the 1981 Edinburgh Jazz Festival. A year later, he was invited to appear on the TV show 'Jazz at the Gateway' with Niels Henning Ørsted Petersen and Jon Christensen; toured with the European Youth Jazz Orchestra, and recorded his quintet for BBC Radio. At 16, he released his 1st album, Giant Strides and studied at Berklee with financial assistance from Sean Connery.

He joined Gary Burton's quintet after a recommendation from Chick Corea, toured worldwide, and recorded on ECM's album Whiz Kids. Smith has documented over thirty solo albums for Blue Note, Linn, ECM and his own Spartacus Record label; toured 50+ countries, composed over 300 works, and collaborated with musicians, poets, and visual artists, including Arild Andersen, Scofield, MacCaig, Alan Davie, Kenny Munro, Jaco, Wheeler, DeJohnette, Liz Lochhead, Christine de Luca, Trilok, and poet Edwin Morgan who he developed a unique artistic relationship in 1996, collaborating on 55 works of poetry and music.

In 1995 he established the SNJO and ensured its progress until funding began in 1998. He founded the TSYJO in 2002 to provide an educational opportunity for the country's best young jazz musicians and fought to establish the first full-time jazz course in Scotland. In 2009 Smith was appointed head of Jazz at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and became Professor in 2010.

Smith holds numerous jazz accolades from BBC, British, UK Parliamentary and Scottish - Jazz Awards. His contributions to Jazz were recognised nationally when in 1998, he became the youngest-ever recipient of an honorary Doctorate from Heriot-Watt University in recognition of his extraordinary artistic achievement. He subsequently received honorary doctorates from Glasgow Caledonian and Edinburgh Universities. In 2019 he was given an OBE for services to Jazz by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

tommymusic.scot

THE ORCHESTRA

WOODWINDS

Martin Kershaw
Helena Kay
Tommy Smith
Konrad Wiszniewski
Bill Fleming

TRUMPETS

Ryan Quigley
James Davison
Christos Stylianides

TROMBONES

Gordon Campbell
Patrick Kenny
Michael Owers
Owen Pickering

RHYTHM

Calum Gourlay
Alyn Cosker
Peter Johnstone

SCOTTISH NATIONAL JAZZ ORCHESTRA

The Scottish National Jazz Orchestra (SNJO) is considered by many to be one of Europe's foremost contemporary big bands.

Founder/Director Tommy Smith established the SNJO in 1995 as a not-for-profit organisation with a crystal-clear artistic vision and core values of versatility, discipline and expression. The SNJO is dedicated to promoting jazz as a pre-eminent art form through performances, original compositions, recordings, and educational outreach programmes. This commitment extends to the task of developing promising young jazz musicians through the ranks of The Tommy Smith Youth Jazz Orchestra.

The SNJO repertoire has included re-imaginings of works by the great, the good and the gigantic, including Weather Report, Herman, Rich, Carter, Strayhorn, Goodman, Kenton, Basie, Gillespie, Mingus, Jaco, Corea, Monk, Metheny, Shorter, Miles and Coltrane. They have also recorded vivid interpretations of Mozart, Prokofiev, Piazzolla, Gershwin and Ellington to rave reviews, alongside a remarkable re-reading of Miles Ahead, an ECM-tinted set on Celebration and Tommy Smith's suites, World of the Gods, Torah, and Beauty & the Beast. The SNJO has built a growing library of original compositions underpinned by a deep understanding and appreciation of improvisation.



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In Memory Of...

We are filled with great sorrow and heavy hearts upon learning of the passing of Susy Duncan.

Our sincere and heartfelt condolences are with Susy's dear friends and family at this time.

We dedicate this concert to her memory.

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Our Friends' scheme enables you to enjoy a closer relationship with the orchestra that will enhance your enjoyment of our concerts and maximise your jazz experience.

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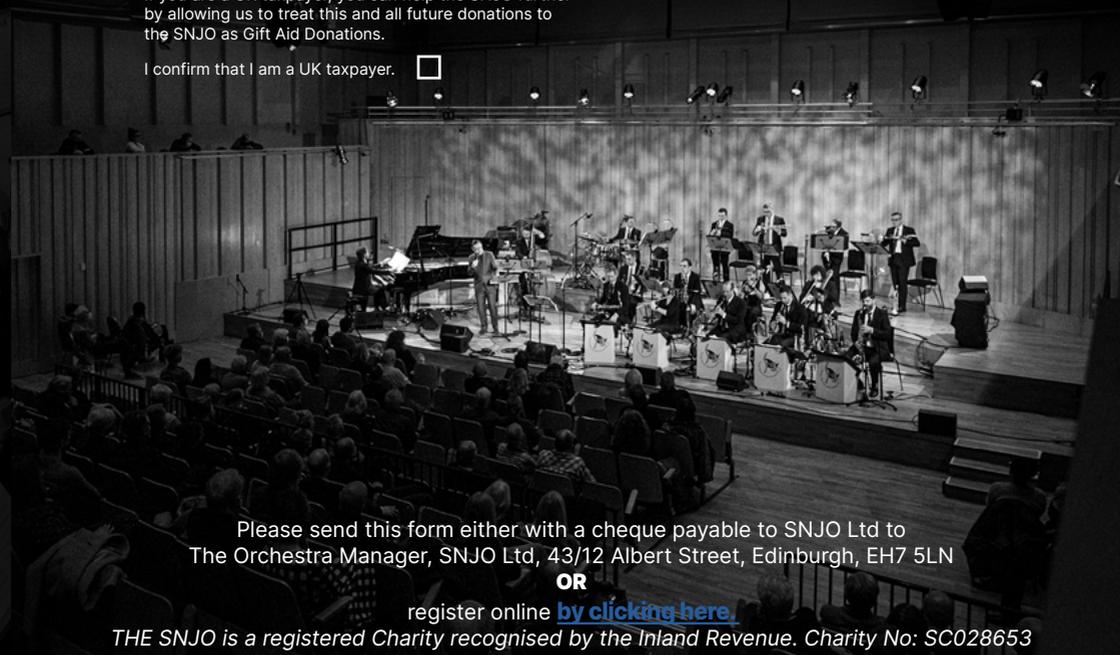
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TOMMY SMITH YOUTH JAZZ ORCHESTRA

It is 20 years since the inception of the TSYJO, and in that time, the orchestra has been a platform for some of the most exciting young jazz musicians in the UK.

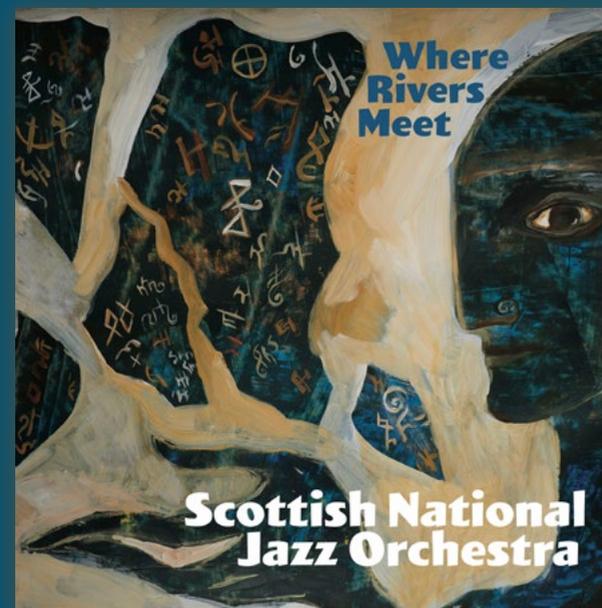
Enjoy a fantastic afternoon as these young players showcase endless talent, improvisational skills, exuberance and verve in an extraordinary concert of outstanding music.

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