

Orchestra celebrates the power of the word on Burns Night

The Scottish National Jazz Orchestra (SNJO) celebrates the birthday of Scotland's national poet, Robert Burns, with the release of a heartfelt instrumental version on video of My Love Is Like a Red, Red Rose on Monday.

Taken from the orchestra's 25th anniversary concert at Perth Concert Hall in December, the recording was made under strict coronavirus regulations and features the orchestra's founder-director, saxophonist Tommy Smith playing the melody that is known around the world for carrying one of the great love songs.

Burns composed My Love Is Like a Red, Red Rose in 1794, just two years before he died, and is said to have written it for his wife and muse, Jean Armour, to sing. The Scottish National Jazz Orchestra's version was arranged by American pianist and composer Geoff Keezer and was originally performed by the orchestra with popular singer and Burns interpreter Eddi Reader.

"As well as paying homage to our national bard, we see this as a tribute to the power of the word," said Tommy Smith. "Every year on this day, people all over the world remember, celebrate and recite Burns' poetry, which is testament to the

lasting quality of his work. And although his words are not included in this version, the lyrics to the song were in my mind as I played it, as should be the case when you're conveying a melody associated with great poetry."

The video, which is available to view free on the orchestra's YouTube channel, also gives the orchestra a chance to connect with its audience at a time when public performances are impossible and likely to remain so for some time.

"For the past three years on Burns Night, we've taken Scottish music and musicians onto the stage of one of the world's greatest jazz clubs, Ronnie Scott's in London," says Smith. "We obviously can't continue that custom this year, so this is our way of toasting the bard and giving SNJO fans a token of our appreciation for their support."