

# SERIOUS

## Gwilym Simcock Biography

At just thirty years old, Gwilym Simcock is one of the most gifted pianists and imaginative composers working on the British scene. Able to move effortlessly between jazz and classical music, at times he can inhabit both worlds, demonstrating 'harmonic sophistication and subtle dovetailing of musical traditions' as well as being a pianist of 'exceptional', 'brilliant' and 'dazzling' ability.

Simcock's influences include jazz legends Keith Jarrett, Chick Corea and John Taylor. Additionally, much inspiration is taken from classical composers such as Maurice Ravel and Igor Stravinsky, as well as contemporary composers, such as Mark-Anthony Turnage who fuses together written and improvised music. Although principally a jazz artist, Simcock breaks new ground between genres and often uses classical reference points in his compositions.

Aside from his renowned solo piano performances, Simcock has performed extensively throughout Europe, playing with the cream of British and international jazz talent, including Dave Holland, Kenny Wheeler, Lee Konitz, Tim Garland, Bob Mintzer, Bill Bruford and Bobby McFerrin among others. His own groups as a leader range from trio to big band to a 40-piece ensemble featuring a gospel choir and strings and his composing strengths are in evidence in every dimension of his music.

*Perception*, Simcock's debut album, featured his sextet with Stan Sulzmann (saxophones), John Parricelli (guitar), Phil Donkin (bass), Martin France (drums) and Ben Bryant (percussion). The release was nominated for Best Album in the BBC Jazz Awards 2008 and has been critically applauded at home and abroad. His most recent solo piano album, *Good Days at Schloss Elmau* (on ACT), has been nominated for this year's Barclaycard Mercury Prize and *Blues Vignette* – his 2009 album featuring solo piano and work with his trio with Yuri Goloubev (bass) and James Maddren (drums) – has been praised as 'sublime', 'flawless' and 'impressive'. Simcock spent most of June 2011 on tour with his quartet, The Impossible Gentlemen. The group's second tour of the year is scheduled for autumn, incorporating a show at the London Jazz Festival in association with BBC Radio 3.

Significant projects have included: *Jackie's Dance* commissioned by Britten Sinfonia; *Point of Contact* and a tour with The Scottish Ensemble; a piano concerto entitled *The Hamburg Suite* and a tour with the NDR Big Band; the second performance of his *Lichfield Suite* Big Band project in the 2007 Cheltenham Jazz Festival; recordings of his solo and Big Band works by BBC Radio 3; a guest appearance with extraordinary vocal artist Bobby McFerrin at the Barbican; performances as guest soloist on Mark-Anthony Turnage's commission with London Sinfonietta for the re-opening of the Royal Festival Hall in June 2007; a solo concert performance and live recording at the Klavier Festival Ruhr, for which he was chosen by US jazz legend Chick Corea; *Contours* for The Aronowitz Ensemble, which premiered at the City of London Festival in June 2008; *Progressions*, his first full-length work for orchestra, which was commissioned by the BBC and premiered at

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the Royal Albert Hall during the 2008 BBC Proms; and *I Prefer the Gorgeous Freedom*, a full-length work for choir and jazz quartet, commissioned by The Voice Project and Norfolk & Norwich Festival and premiered in May 2009 in Norwich Cathedral.

Recent composition highlights have included an orchestral work for The Hague Festival in the Netherlands; *Simple Tales*, a composition for Britten Sinfonia soloists which was performed in the UK and Poland; *Confluence*, a commissioned work for piano and string quartet for Cheltenham Music Festival; an improvised dance piece with modern dance pioneer Nigel Charnock; and a commission for Leasowes Bank Festival in Shropshire.

A former winner of the Perrier Award, BBC Jazz and British Jazz Rising Star Awards, Simcock has also previously been named the All Party Parliamentary Jazz Awards 'Jazz Musician of the Year'. In addition to participating in Take Five, the UK's unique artist development initiative, Simcock was also the first ever jazz artist to be selected as a BBC Radio 3 'New Generations Artist' in 2006. His impressive formal education has included Trinity College of Music (London); Chetham's School of Music (Manchester), where he studied classical piano, French horn and composition; and the Royal Academy of Music (London), where he graduated from the jazz course with first class honours and the coveted 'Principal's Prize' for outstanding achievement.

[www.gwilymsimcock.com](http://www.gwilymsimcock.com)

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