

Tommy Smith to play solo concert at St Giles

Saxophonist Tommy Smith realises a long-held ambition when he plays a solo concert in St Giles' Cathedral on Saturday 17 July.

Growing up in Wester Hailes Smith was aware of St Giles' imposing stature from an early age and after taking up the saxophone at eleven the idea of playing in the cathedral's acoustics began to take hold.

"I'm not sure when I first stepped inside the cathedral but it made a big impression," says Smith, now 54, who has toured the world with leading musicians including vibes virtuoso Gary Burton and Norwegian bass master Arild Andersen, as well as his own groups, since his teens.

His desire to play solo in the cathedral was enhanced when the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra filmed its Where Rivers Meet series of streamed performances there, with no audience, at the end of April.



“I had the chance to play a few phrases on my own then and got a real sense of the wonderful quality of sound these old stones could help to create,” he says. “I wanted to share that

sound with people as soon as it became possible to have public performances again.”

During the pandemic, Smith has kept busy with the jazz course he founded at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Glasgow in 2009. As the founder and director of the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra he was also acutely aware that the orchestra needed to keep in touch with its audience. He has overseen the editing and release of a set of videos that have been posted online at regular intervals. Where Rivers Meet, which saw the orchestra collaborate with Russian-born, Edinburgh-based artist Maria Rud, is the latest of these and remains available to view on the orchestra’s website until 15th August.

For his solo concert in St Giles’ Smith plans to play tunes from the jazz, folk and praise song traditions, letting the music breathe and develop in the naturally bright ambience. It’s one of a trio of concerts he’s giving during July in venerable places of worship – St Machar’s Cathedral in Aberdeen and Lichfield Cathedral in Staffordshire being the others.

“I see these concerts as a celebration of melody,” he says. “They might also be seen as a chance for contemplation as people think about what we’ve been through over the past fifteen months and enjoy the possibility of being able to share live music events again after the enforced silence. I’m really looking forward to playing and hearing the notes linger in the air, particularly in St Giles’, which has such a special atmosphere.”

<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/stgilescathedral/537315>