

Live art and spontaneous saxophone music combine in St Giles'

Edinburgh-based Russian artist Maria Rud and leading saxophonist Tommy Smith unite to present Luminescence in St Giles' Cathedral on Friday 18 November.

A new project bringing together aural and visual improvisation, Luminescence will be created spontaneously in front of the audience as the artist and musician respond to each other's ideas and interact with the architecture and acoustics of the twelfth century cathedral.

"Images come to me with music," says Rud, who has collaborated in the past with percussion virtuoso Evelyn Glennie and the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra. "It is not a single image or a collection of images, but a live "storyboard" in which music plays the role of a script."



Rud, who was born in Moscow to a Ukrainian mother, sees St Giles' as the co-creator of the show as her images will be projected onto the East Wall of the church. Smith will also interact with the cathedral's natural acoustics.

"This gives Luminescence a unique quality as by projecting art onto a particular building's architecture we can never create the same show twice," says Rud.

Rud and Smith met at a reception in the National Museum of Scotland and after conversing for a few minutes they agreed that they should work together at some point. They first collaborated when Smith, the artistic director of the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra, invited Rud to create images in response to the Orchestra's dedications to saxophone pioneers including Albert Ayler and Ornette Coleman in their Where Rivers Meet concert series in May 2021.

"These were arranged suites and the performance had to be streamed as we were still under Covid regulations," says Smith. "So, although there was improvisation in Where Rivers Meet, Luminescence will be quite a different experience as Maria and I will both be starting with a blank canvas, as it were, and we'll have the added inspiration of working in front of a live audience."

Although she has no preconceptions of what she will create in Luminescence, since Russia invaded Ukraine on 24th February Rud has been reflecting the war in her work and striving to bring light at a time of darkness and uncertainty.

"I don't believe that art has nationality," she says. "I lived and worked in Stockholm before I moved to Edinburgh but my mother, who was a wonderful composer, was born in Kyiv, so I don't like to be branded as being from one place or another. I also don't believe that art is the product of intellect. I paint what I see and I'm looking forward to responding to Tommy's marvellous saxophone playing. He makes such a wonderful sound."