

Saxophonist Bancroft opens new Linlithgow concert series

Red Door promotions has announced a new series of concerts at St Peter's Church in Linlithgow, with one of the UK's top saxophonists, Phil Bancroft opening the programme.

Bancroft appears in a duo with guitarist Graeme Stephen on Friday 23rd August, with harper Karen Marshalsay presenting music on all three harps from the Scottish tradition – gut-strung, wire-strung and bray harp – on Friday 20 September.

Alto saxophonist and finalist in BBC's Masterchef, Laura Macdonald follows on Friday 25 October in a duo with guitarist Kevin Mackenzie, and leading Scots singer Fiona Hunter closes the series on Friday 29 November accompanied by keyboardist Tom Gibbs.

Both Phil Bancroft and Fiona Hunter will be appearing with the Grit Orchestra for Edinburgh International Festival on Sunday 25 August and Bancroft says the contrast between playing in a big venue like Edinburgh Playhouse and the intimate St Peter's is one of the great attractions in being a musician.

"I haven't actually played at St Peter's before," says the saxophonist, "but Graeme has played there a few times and he's full of praise for the atmosphere and sound quality in the church. I love playing with the Grit Orchestra, partly because we'll be celebrating the music of Martyn Bennett, who was a

good friend, but also because it's wonderful to be part of such a great, big sound."

The more personal musical conversation that Bancroft and Stephen will have in Linlithgow also appeals greatly, however.

"We'll be sitting close together and quite close to the audience as well, so the sense of intimacy will be strong," says Bancroft. "I enjoy playing in that situation because you can bring in lots of subtlety and nuance whereas on a big stage you might be more concerned with presence."

Bancroft is currently in the middle of a programme of album releases. Having established his Myriad Streams web platform, where listeners can get to know his work without being constantly offered other music, he has been adding to the titles available there.

He reissues his first album as a leader, Swings & Roundabouts from 1997, in early September and has plans for both a trio album with Graeme Stephen and the Indian percussionist Gyan Singh and a solo album.

"Swings & Roundabouts didn't really get the coverage I'd hoped for at the time," he says. "That was a bit discouraging, but I went back and listened to it for the first time in quite a while recently and felt it was still a strong first statement. We might play some of the tunes from it in Linlithgow, I'm not sure, but it will be good to be able to let people know first-hand that I have music available."



Phil Bancroft PHOTO Douglas Robertson