

Spontaneous music and art celebrate St Giles' special anniversary

Saxophonist Tommy Smith reunites with the internationally acclaimed artist Maria Rud to celebrate the 900th anniversary of St Giles' Cathedral from Thursday 15th to Saturday 17th August.

Smith and Rud will be performing Luminescence, which develops spontaneously in front of the audience as Rud responds to Smith's saxophone improvisations and her paintings are projected onto the the East Wall inside the Cathedral. The Scotsman described the show last year as "one of the most spectacular experiences of the Fringe".

"We begin each performance with no preconceptions of the direction the show will take," says Rud, who has previously collaborated with percussion virtuoso Dame Evelyn Glennie and the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra and recently worked with the RIAS Kammerchor in Berlin. "Tommy starts to play and the music he creates in the moment triggers images in my mind that I translate visually."

In keeping with the idea of the performance as a conversation, Rud is aware that the rhythm of her brush strokes can also influence what Smith plays.

"It's fascinating to work in this way," says Rud. "There are

images from the legend of St Giles himself, for whom the Cathedral was named, that might lend themselves to creating a narrative through art. For instance, the story of St Giles saving a white hart by stopping an arrow fired by the king with his hand is very strong in terms of inspiration. But while that image might figure at some point in this special 900th anniversary version of Luminescence, it's really just something that will be at the back of my mind and won't be included as a set-piece."

In collaborating with Smith, Rud is happy to join a long line of leading jazz musicians and poets who have fuelled the Edinburgh-born saxophonist's imagination across a forty-year international career. Both Smith and Rud, however, feel that St Giles' itself, is as much as a part of Luminescence as the two artists themselves.

"For us, just being inside the Cathedral and being aware of its wonderful architecture and awe-inspiring stillness is special," says Rud. "Of course, there's a sense of danger as we are creating the whole show without a pre-written script but that's part of the thrill of the performance. It's like a conversation that can go anywhere, although there are certain factors we can guarantee – the magnificent sound of Tommy's saxophone playing and the unique atmosphere inside St Giles'."

