

Saxophonist brings Golden Sands to Queen's Hall

Helena Kay returns to The Queen's Hall in Edinburgh on Thursday 13 February for the second in a series of four concerts that the saxophonist has been invited to curate by the venue.

Promoted under the Jazz Thursdays banner, the concert features Kay's quartet revisiting the saxophonist's internationally acclaimed second album, *Golden Sands*, with support from improvising folk duo Norman&Corrie.

"I really enjoyed recording *Golden Sands* with my band at the time and I was happy with the results," says Kay, a former Young Scottish Jazz Musician of the Year who went on to win the much-coveted Peter Whittingham Jazz Award and became a Take Five artist in 2024. "But I'm looking forward to playing the music with my current quartet as different musicians bring their own interpretations and add their own personalities to each tune."

Kay's current group features a familiar rhythm section as pianist Peter Johnstone, bassist Calum Gourlay and drummer Alyn Cosker all play with the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra, as does Kay.

"We've played in the Queen's Hall often with the SNJO and it's a fantastic venue but this is the first time we'll have played there as a quartet," says Kay. "It'll feel quite different

having just the four of us onstage instead of being part of a sixteen-piece ensemble. We'll have so much room to work in!"

Kay is also keen to hear Norman&Corrie, having chosen them to open the concert largely on the strength of fellow saxophonist, Shetland-born Norman Willmore's debut album, *Alive and Well* at the Muckle Roe Hall.

"I loved Norman's approach to improvising and the way his group worked with the Shetland tradition and other folk influences on that album," says Kay.

Willmore, a graduate of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama jazz course, has since joined forces with drummer-percussionist Corrie Dick, who, like Kay, is a former Young Scottish Jazz Musician of the Year. They launched their debut album, *Twa Double Doubles*, to an enthusiastic reception at EFG London Jazz Festival in November and have since won more admirers at Celtic Connections in Glasgow.

"I've been listening to their album a lot," says Kay. "I love the way they interact spontaneously and create music that's daring but also very melodic, again with that Shetland influence. I'm looking forward so much to hearing them live."



Helena Kay by Drake Yolanda Award and Mariola Zoladz