

# Testimony bears witness to Bancroft's solo saxophone mastery

## Saxophonist Phil Bancroft is on a roll.

The East Lothian-based musician releases Testimony, an improvised suite for solo saxophone, as the sixth release on his Myriad Streams platform on Friday 25 April. It comes just a matter of weeks after Bancroft launched a new trio, The Beautiful Storm at the St Bride's Centre in Orwell Terrace.

Recorded during lockdown in 2021 in a barn on the smallholding he and his wife, Jude, had recently moved into, Testimony was musically completely unplanned and spontaneous.

"I was exploring the amazing acoustics of the barn and trying to learn how to make videos for social media," says Bancroft. "So, I set up some cameras and a nice microphone and thought, 'Let's see what happens...'"

After pressing the record buttons on his laptop and cameras, Bancroft played his tenor saxophone for just over thirty minutes.

"I improvised with no intention or plan. To be honest, while I was playing, I was feeling that the whole thing was a waste of time, that I couldn't play, my inner critic was in full flow."

Suspecting that what he had recorded was worthless, Bancroft almost deleted the file. But on listening back to it over the subsequent days, he discovered that he had captured what he now considers the most profound piece of music of his career

to date.

Bancroft, who emerged as part of a generation of jazz musicians in Scotland that was defined by the trailblazing John Rae Collective, in which the saxophonist joined trumpeter Colin Steele, pianist Brian Kellock, guitarist Kevin Mackenzie, bassist Kenny Ellis and drummer John Rae, has been a force on the UK scene since the late 1980s.

He has led ensembles from trios to orchestras and multimedia projects, and as well as fronting his acclaimed international quartet, with American bassist Reid Anderson, Norwegian drummer Thomas Strønen, and English guitarist Mike Walker. He was a key part of the much-lauded Trio AAB, with drumming twin Tom and guitarist Kevin Mackenzie. A recent successful tour saw the launch of Bancroft's new trio, The Beautiful Storm with guitarist Graeme Stephen and Indian percussionist Gyan Singh, with whom Bancroft released the enthusiastically received duo album, Birth & Death.

Solo saxophone recordings have established a genre of their own in recent years and Bancroft, in taking on the role of storyteller and exploring sound worlds of beauty and expression, hopes that Testimony has added to this genre.

"Despite my initial reservations, I feel I have created something of merit that is very much my own work that captures more than just the notes formed in the moment and I am proud and excited to release it into the world."

