

# barbican

Winter 24/25



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### Booking

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### Stay in touch

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↻ Matthew Baynton as Bottom and Sirine Saba as Titania in the Royal Shakespeare Company's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Photo by Pamela Raith © RSC.

← Arpita Singh, *Seashore* in *The Imaginary Institution of India: Art 1975 - 1998*. © Max Colson

### Accessible events

Look out for the access symbols in the key on the right to find accessible events and exhibitions. Head to the event or exhibition webpage for precise times of accessible events.

### Accessible tickets

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For more information about accessibility at the Barbican, scan the QR code or visit [barbican.org.uk/access](http://barbican.org.uk/access)

### **AD** Audio described

For people with visual impairments. Live commentary is given through a headset that explains what is happening as it unfolds.

### **BSL** BSL-interpreted

This event uses British Sign Language for D/deaf and hard of hearing customers. Events may be BSL-interpreted or BSL-led.

### **CAP** Captioned

Captioning assists D/deaf and hard of hearing customers, and anyone else who finds subtitles useful.

### **REL** Relaxed

Ideal for anyone who would benefit from a more informal setting. You can come and go during the event, make noise and have a less formal experience.

### **TT** Touch tours

A chance to experience the set in advance to help you understand the performance better. For anyone who would benefit due to their disability.



# Welcome to winter at the Barbican

**Our seasonal programme is just the ticket if you're looking for light and joy at this festive time of year.**

As the year winds down and we find ourselves in the midst of winter, step into a world of light, creativity, and renewal. This season, our programming will share moments of joy, brightness and warmth, a welcome balance to darker days and the darker days of winter.

Don't miss the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Though its title evokes warmer times, the magic it's imbued with is just right for this time of year, as it blends themes of dreams and illumination, with a light-hearted touch.

We also need each other more than ever. For families, or those who are finding chosen family, we have seasonal communal events for all ages to share. Among the highlights is a family concert by our resident orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, while *First Light* - an installation that bathes you and baby (aged 0-18 months) in light and sound, and our special Family and Senior Community Screenings of films. In the Music programme there are opportunities to join in carol singing, a gospel night, and *Sanctuary & Solidarity*, a concert that focuses on refugees at this time of year.

And in the spirit of renewal, start your 2025 with a series of incredible performances at MimeLondon, including *Moby Dick* by French-Norwegian theatre company Plexus Polaire - a magical puppet show filled with breathtaking artistry that creates an interplay of shadow and light.

In music, Irish singer-songwriter Lisa O'Neill will perform 'Symphony for the Cold

Moon', which introduces new orchestrations of songs from her back catalogue, while Dur Dur Band takes us to 1980s Mogadishu and the golden era of music before the civil war. And don't miss the chance to catch our exhibitions including the *Imaginary Institution of India* and Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum's *It Will End In Tears* in The Curve, which close on 5 January.

Alongside these performances, we're delighted to introduce seasonal food offerings, designed to make your visit to the Barbican a feast for all senses. Get together with loved ones for a taste of warmth and community in a space to relax, and celebrate in a way that feels cozy and joyful, a true festive escape within the City.

Whether you're here to revel in the festivities, discover new stories, or spend quality time with loved ones, the Barbican is a place to find a renewed sense of light and possibility. As we look to the new year ahead, we hope you'll join us for moments that inspire, uplift, and remind us of the beauty in art, family, gathering and connection.

## **Devyani Saltzman**

Director for Arts & Participation

→ Don't miss our exhibition  
*The Imaginary Institution of India* © Max Colson Barbican Art Gallery



# A musical feast for the festive season

It's the most wonderful time of the year and have we got a feast of entertainment for you. From the grandeur of symphonic music to the warmth of classic carols, or the playful swing of jazz-inspired holiday tunes, this is a cracker of a season. Here's what to look forward to this winter.





**Abel Selaocoe:  
Christmas from Around the World**

Celebrate the holiday season with a global twist as cellist Abel Selaocoe presents *Christmas from Around the World*. Known for his innovative approach to classical music, Selaocoe blends Western classical traditions with African influences, creating performances that are both joyful and deeply moving. His dynamic style and engaging stage presence have earned him international acclaim, making this concert a unique addition to the festive season.

In this special programme, Selaocoe is joined by the BBC Singers to explore the diverse musical traditions of Christmas across different cultures, weaving together sounds from Africa and Europe.

**5 Dec** 7.30pm, Milton Court

© Christina Ebenezer

Enjoy music in a candlelight setting as part of the Raymond Gubbay Christmas Festival



**Raymond Gubbay Christmas Festival 2024**

Celebrate the magic of the season with the annual Raymond Gubbay Christmas Festival. This year's festival promises a bumper mix of traditional carols, festive orchestral pieces, and seasonal classics.

There's a sackful of treats to choose from, whatever music is your 'sound of the season'. At the more traditional end of things is a programme of festive classics performed by The Choir of King's College, Cambridge, or enjoy the warm glow of a concert of carols and seasonal classics, staged in an evocative candle-lit style setting. Get the party started with *The Big Christmas Party* featuring a blend of festive pop hits and traditional favourites, or feel the joy of the season with Flames Collective's *A Gospel Christmas*, featuring the renowned choir who won huge praise for their performance with RAYE at the BRIT Awards this year.

Movies are a big part of this time of year and there are plenty of opportunities to hear music from your favourite films, including a concert of the Best of John Williams (*Harry Potter*, *Star Wars*, *Jurassic Park* and more), a chance to live your best fantasy life with epic music from *Lord of the Rings*, *The Hobbit*, *Game of Thrones*, or settle the scores with *The Music of Zimmer vs Williams*.

The season closes with the New Year's Day Proms, featuring a celebration of classical favourites, to get your 2025 off to a stirring start.

**7 Dec-1 Jan** Hall

Flames Collective's *A Gospel Christmas* is part of Raymond Gubbay's Christmas Festival.



## Christmas with Connaught Brass

For their Barbican debut, Connaught Brass serves up a festive programme that mixes tradition with fresh twists, blending classic works with inventive arrangements. This award-winning ensemble, hailed for their bold, innovative approach, gift-wraps holiday cheer with exuberance and reflection.

The concert opens with Robin Haigh's *Get Good*, a contemporary piece that sets a lively, playful tone. Then, we dive into the baroque brilliance of Antonio Vivaldi's *Concerto in F major*, followed by Lili Boulanger's evocative *Two Pieces*, offering a softer, contemplative mood, plus there's some festive fun with a cheeky rendition of *When Santa Got Stuck Up the Chimney*.

With a repertoire that spans over 500 years, from Baroque classics to contemporary gems, Connaught Brass prove why they're a "thrilling young ensemble" (Great Birmingham Brass Festival).

**8 Dec** 4pm, Milton Court



## SANSARA Choir with United Strings of Europe: Sanctuary & Solidarity

A spell-binding offering of musical solidarity to all those seeking refuge, and an invitation to reflect on our role in creating spaces of sanctuary. At the centre of this programme is Caroline Shaw's *To the Hands*, with its guiding question 'what are these wounds in the midst of our hands?', alongside music by Hildur Guðnadóttir, Thomas Tallis and featured guest artist Syrian oud master Basel Saleh.

**14 Dec** 7.30pm, Milton Court



✓ Connaught Brass will make their Barbican debut this winter.

← SANSARA Choir share an offering of musical solidarity with all those seeking refuge. © Matthew Johnson

↓ Academy of Ancient Music will perform Handel's *Messiah*. © Benjamin Ealovega



## Academy of Ancient Music: Handel's Messiah

In the pantheon of festive music, Handel's *Messiah* is among the best-loved favourites. Known for their historically informed performances, the Academy of Ancient Music brings this iconic work to life using period instruments, offering a truly authentic interpretation of Handel's masterpiece. With Laurence Cummings at the harpsichord, plus an A-list line-up of soloists, it will feature the 'Hallelujah' chorus and a stunning array of arias. As the first orchestra ever to record it on period instruments in 1980, the AAM's interpretation offers an authentic and fresh way to enjoy this beloved work.

**16 Dec** 7pm, Hall



## Christmas Swing: Gershwin, Bernstein and Tchaikovsky

Classical meets jazz with a dash of holiday cheer as the LSO presents a lively programme featuring Gershwin's most swinging tunes, Bernstein's exuberant brilliance, and a wild ride with Kapustin's jazz-infused concerto.

The evening kicks off with Gershwin's *Overture to Girl Crazy*, packed with rhythm and infectious energy. Bernstein's *Prelude, Fugue and Riffs* takes classical form and gives it a stylish jazz twist, with Sérgio Pires, the LSO's Principal Clarinet, as soloist.

Kapustin's Piano Concerto No. 4 brings the atmosphere of a jazz club to the concert hall, with Frank Dupree delivering a powerhouse performance in a piece that features a virtuoso piano solo and even a drum kit. The jazz continues with Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn's reimagining of Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker Suite* transforming familiar ballet tunes into smooth, swing-infused numbers.

To cap off the evening, the LSO gives a nod to tradition with Leroy Anderson's *Sleigh Ride*, a festive, old-school favourite that perfectly captures the magic of the season.

**18–19 Dec** 7pm, Hall

↓ Sir Antonio Pappano will conduct the LSO in *Christmas Swing*. ©Mark Allan



## Raymond Gubbay Christmas Festival

### A Gospel Christmas

**7 Dec** 7.30pm, Hall

### Christmas with King's College Choir

**20 Dec** 7.30pm, Hall

### Candlelit Carols

**21 Dec** 2.30pm, Hall

### Christmas Carol Singalong

**22 Dec** 2pm & 5.15pm, Hall

### The Big Christmas Party

**23 Dec** 2.30pm, Hall

### Glenn Miller Orchestra

**27 Dec** 2.30pm, Hall

### The Best of John Williams

**27 Dec** 7.30pm, Hall

### Beethoven's Ninth

**28 Dec** 7.30pm, Hall

### Four Seasons by Candlelight

**29 Dec** 2.30pm, Hall

### Music of the Movies: The Lord of the Rings, Game of Thrones and Beyond

**29 Dec** 7.30pm, Hall

### The Holiday

**30 Dec** 7.30pm, Hall

### The Music of Zimmer vs. Williams

**31 Dec** 2.30pm, Hall

### New Year's Day Proms

**1 Jan** 3pm, Hall

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# Festive gift inspiration

Our Merry & Bright range brings festive cheer with a touch of global inspiration, drawing from current *The Imaginary Institution of India* exhibition. This vibrant collection combines traditional holiday charm with rich colours and intricate patterns inspired by India's artistic landscape. From decorative ornaments by Ian Snow, to elegant tableware by Rooh London and hand-crafted stationery by East End Press, the range blends classic holiday sparkle and contemporary global flair, to brighten up the season. Whether you're buying a gift or treating yourself, here are some highlights to be found in our Shop:



## Silk scarf

Featuring 'Shamiana' by Nilima Sheikh, being exhibited in *The Imaginary Institution of India*, this double-sided silk scarf makes a wonderful gift. This versatile piece is made in the UK from 100% heavy silk twill, has a hand-rolled hem and comes packaged in a sophisticated gift box, £120.



## Jaipur Stripe Block Print Napkins

Infuse vibrant colour into your dining experience with our exquisite hand block print napkins. These pink and red striped cloth napkins not only enhance your table's aesthetics but also contribute to an eco-friendly dining choice.



## Blue Stars Handcrafted Sewn Garland

This garland has ten decorated patterned stars in rich blues and deep coppers along the three metre length. Screen-printed on both sides by artisans in Jaipur, it's made from recycled materials.



## Green with Bright Flowers Bauble

These wonderful handmade baubles are made from papier mâché using recycled paper. The baubles are then hand painted by talented artisans with glorious colours and beautiful designs.

# Meet the Barbican residents

## Photographer Anton Rodriguez's book, *Barbican Residents* documents the intriguing mix of Barbican people who live on the estate in the intimate settings of their own homes.

As well as our famous arts centre, the 40-acre estate includes landscaped gardens, a lake, its own school and church. With an estimated 4,000 residents living in the Barbican, there are over 2,000 flats with no less than a 140 different types of layout.

Rodriguez's project blends a longing to know more about his neighbours and a desire to capture the essence of the Brutalist Barbican architecture. In this extract from the book, he shares the story of one couple who've made this famous part of the City their home.

Aisha and Ezo have lived in the Barbican for five years, along with their daughter.

Aisha was born and raised in Scotland; Ezo grew up in London, the UAE and Eastern Europe before studying in Scotland.

Both moved to London around ten years ago but were soon purging and packing up their belongings to go travelling for a few years.

They moved to the Barbican on their return to the city, falling in love at first sight with their apartment.

It is the longest they have lived anywhere and where they feel most at home. They have a particular fondness for the garden, the shop that stocks local goods and the library – but until living here, they didn't realise that it is also the ideal place to raise a child. The central location means they can travel everywhere by their favourite mode of transport: their feet.

## Barbican Residents is available in our shop or online.



← Aisha and Ezo say the Barbican is the longest they have lived anywhere.  
©Anton Rodriguez



## 'The peripheries are where you can be subversive'

Discover how our gallery The Curve inspired artist Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum to create a cinematic and immersive experience.

Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum's *It Will End In Tears* is a new large-scale installation in our gallery The Curve. Exploring themes of migration, freedom, and transformation, the exhibition fills the 90m space with a series of structures resembling film sets, to share the story of a 'femme fatale' film noir character living in an imagined colonial outpost.

The architecture of the space had an important impact on Sunstrum's Barbican debut exhibition. She describes her initial encounter with The Curve as a 'weird liminal experience', a moment that demanded more than just a creative response. 'The first thing you feel is the impact on your body,' she says. 'You feel so small.' The architecture, with its curves and smooth surfaces, almost seemed to invite her to engage with it, as though the space itself required a certain kind of reverence.

Liminal spaces – those thresholds between one state and another – have always inspired Sunstrum's work. It's in these in-between spaces where she says she does her best creating. 'I seem to thrive in those spaces where I'm in-between one thing and another,' she explains. 'The peripheries are where you can be subversive. You can be a little sneaky. You can play with double meaning.'

This isn't just art to be observed; it's an experience that surrounds and implicates the viewer. Sunstrum compares the process to a performance, where her role as the artist is central to the work itself. 'It feels really honest,' she says. 'Being vulnerable, being open about the struggle of the process.'

This openness about the challenges of creation is essential to Sunstrum's approach. In an era where technology

### Want free entry?

Barbican Members go free to all exhibitions.

### Aged 14–25?

Join Young Barbican for free and get tickets to the Art Gallery for just £5.

Visit our website for all the details.



plays an increasing role in the art world, her emphasis on the physical act of making feels particularly relevant.

*It Will End In Tears* creates an experience that is both intensely personal and universally engaging – this is not just an exhibition but an immersive experience. Sunstrum's work offers a chance to step into a world where boundaries dissolve, and space, narrative, and body converge.

As she says: 'It will end in tears is a phrase that I feel I've heard in many ways in the past – that idea of "go ahead and do this little thing that you want to do, you go ahead and pursue this dream that you have, but you'll be sorry, you know it'll end in tears and you'll be sorry". [This is] my way of being a bit cheeky and asking the question: "who's sorry now? Whose tears are we crying now?"'

### Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum: *It Will End In Tears*

Until 5 Jan The Curve, Free

Find a full interview with Sunstrum on our YouTube channel.

This exhibition has been commissioned by the Barbican, London with the generous support of Mr Harry G. David and Goodman Gallery.

↑ *It Will End In Tears, SCENE 18, 2024.* Courtesy Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum and Goodman Gallery. Photo: Alexander Edwards.



# Four female artists not to miss at our landmark exhibition

**The Imaginary Institution of India: Art 1975–1998, showcases work made during an historically significant period in the subcontinent’s history. Make sure to look out for these artists on your visit.**

↑ Inside Nilima Sheikh’s *Shamiana* at *The Imaginary Institution of India* runs until 5 January in our Art Gallery. © Eva Herzog Studio Barbican Art Gallery

→ Sheela Gowda, *Untitled*, 1997/2007 © Sheela Gowda Courtesy Museum Gouda

↗ Nalini Malani, *Remembering Toba Tek Singh*, 1998, Installation view, World Wide Video Festival, Amsterdam, 1998 © Nalini Malani

## Sheela Gowda

Sheela Gowda (b. 1957, Bhadravati) is known for her evocative use of everyday materials in sculpture and installation. Originally trained as a painter at the Ken School of Art in Bangalore and the Royal College of Art in London, Gowda expanded her practice to work with materials such as cow dung, incense, and vermilion – substances rich with cultural significance in India. Her art explores themes of labour, ritual, and the social changes brought about by economic liberalisation, particularly the ways traditional practices are being altered. Gowda’s process-driven works often reflect the tensions between modernisation and spirituality, engaging with both the personal and the political. Notable previous exhibitions include documenta 12, *Indian Highway*, Serpentine Gallery, London (2009); *Making Worlds*, Venice Biennale (2009).

## Nalini Malani

A pioneering figure in Indian video art, Nalini Malani was born in 1946 in Karachi, undivided India. After studying at the Sir J. J. School of Art in Mumbai and the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, she developed a prolific multimedia career spanning painting, video, animation, and performance. Malani’s work confronts issues such as feminist narratives, postcolonial violence, and mythological themes, intertwining personal and societal histories. Her works have been exhibited globally,



including a major retrospective at the Centre Pompidou, Paris (2017–18).

## Nilima Sheikh

After studying history at Delhi University, Nilima Sheikh pursued painting at Maharaja Sayajirao University in Baroda. Her richly allegorical work draws on myth, folklore, and contemporary concerns, often exploring themes of identity and the political landscapes of regions such as Kashmir. Sheikh’s unique visual style combines traditional and modern elements, and her work has been exhibited internationally, including at documenta 14 (2017) and the Kochi-Muziris Biennale (2018).

## Arpita Singh

Born in 1937 in Baranagar, Arpita Singh is an acclaimed modernist painter. After studying fine arts at the Delhi Polytechnic, she developed a distinctive style blending folk art traditions with modernist techniques. Singh’s works, often infused with vibrant colour and surreal imagery, address political violence, social struggles, and memory. Her art has been showcased globally, including in a major retrospective at the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art in New Delhi (2019), where she continues to live and work.

**The Imaginary Institution of India: Art 1975–1998**

Until 5 Jan Art Gallery **AD BSL REL**



## Get money off tickets

Barbican Members enjoy 20% off cinema tickets\*.

## Aged 14–25?

Join Young Barbican for free and get cinema tickets from just £5.

Visit our website for all the details.

\*There's always an asterisk. In this case, there are a few exceptions – check the website for details.

## Behind the screens

As we prepare for another winter packed with ScreenTalks in our cinemas, let's look back at some of the insights our previous guests shared with audiences



### Writer/ director Yorgos Lanthimos at a ScreenTalk for *Kinds of Kindness* on humour

'I think that's the point: it would have to be so dramatic that it's funny. Sometimes I think I try to use some of the elements that way. Even if a scene is darker or dramatic, within this film that has other instances of humour. I might use music in such a dramatic way, that ends up being funny. It's just how you use all of the elements at your disposal to find that humour.'

### Actor Emma Stone on Yorgos Lanthimos

'[Yorgos] will make films that includes final cut and major creative control. When it comes to the way the films are made and what he's able to do, he won't make a film without that. The script is approved, the cut is his, and so he has that ability to walk away going: this is what I wanted to make, no matter how the audiences respond to it.'

### Writer/director Alex Garland at the ScreenTalk for *Civil War* on collaboration

'I used to be a novelist. You write books on your own – that is authorship. You don't make films on your own. You make them with a very large group of people, and they have significant voices. People don't fight over DOPs when they're crewing up because the DOP then just slavishly follow the director's vision. Clearly, they're bringing something, manifestly they're bringing something.'

### Editor Jennifer Lame on starting out in the industry

'I was always into movies as a kid... I went to college and I made a documentary. And I shot thirty hours of film and I had to cut it down to ten minutes. I became obsessed with all the different versions of the documentary I could make.'

'After college, I really wanted to just get a job. I didn't want to go be a director, so I just started to hustle and get assisting editing jobs, or PA jobs. And I just committed, but I think it was [editing] just what I loved the most.'

### Writer/director Cord Jefferson at the ScreenTalk for *American Fiction* on taking risks

'You can't take a risk on Barry Jenkins, right? You can't take a risk on these people who have already made a name for themselves. You need to take a risk on people who are unproven. That is part of what it means to bring people in from the margins – is taking a risk on people yet to prove themselves. And you take a risk to allow them to prove themselves. And that's what Jeffrey [Wright] did for me. He didn't have to do this. He could have done something else. Like I said, he didn't have to trust me with this. He didn't have to latch his wagon to mine, but he did. And after he did that, he totally legitimised the movie. All of a sudden, the financiers were willing to come up with more money. Other actors were more excited to join the

project, and it really got on his feet and will be forever indebted to him for that.'

### Composer Ludwig Göransson on finding his niche

'In high school I got into jazz, so I was writing jazz songs and all different kinds of genres. Then I got an opportunity in high school to write a little piece of music for an orchestra. So I heard a 70 piece orchestra for my music for the first time. That was a very cathartic experience. I was like 'how in the world can I do this again?' And I think I was in the movie theatre and I saw Kill Bill. There was a piece of music which she's whistling the song and it turns into the film score. That experience was very powerful to me.'

### Director Steve McQueen on his film *Blitz*

'You write the screenplay, then you go, blimey, does George exist? Does this kid exist? I worked with Nina Gold, a great casting director; we put the audition out there, and low and behold some tapes came back and I saw this kid; he looked really pissed off, like he didn't want to be there, and he had this magnetism to his face. You really wanted to know what he was thinking. You couldn't not look at his face and these beautiful big eyes which would just kind of look at you... You know when you have a child, have contact with a child. They show you a leaf... It's almost like you see a leaf for the first time through a kid's eyes. And that's what I wanted with Elliott, for you to see the world again through a child's eyes.'

A selection of our ScreenTalks are available to watch on our website and YouTube.

## ScreenTalks

Award Season ScreenTalks Until Mar 3

← Emma Stone and Yorgos Lanthimos

# Animation at war

**Discover how filmmakers have used the magic of animation to reimagine the chaos, courage, and complexity of war.**

Our new year-long film series, *Animation at War*, offers a profound exploration of how filmmakers use animation to depict the complexities and horrors of war. Through expressive and allegorical storytelling, animation serves as a powerful medium for examining the human experience in times of conflict, giving voice to stories that live-action films often struggle to convey.

The series features rare screenings of films from across the globe. These works do more than depict battles; they confront viewers with the psychological toll of combat, the shadow of nuclear threat, and the ongoing trauma of living through wartime.

*Animation at War* allows us to bring

together international films that handle complex, adult subject matter through an art form that often circumvents traditional defences and opens up new emotional landscapes for audiences.'

Michael Leader, culture writer, broadcaster, and co-creator of the acclaimed *Ghibliothèque* podcast, which celebrates animation in all its forms, curated the series. He says animation offers a distinctive lens through which we can view profound human experiences: 'Animation isn't a genre; it's a tool, a way of representing the world. It allows us to approach difficult topics – such as war – from fresh perspectives, offering viewers a form of emotional distance while



confronting them with realities that live-action films might struggle to convey.'

The series consists of three standout films, each from a different part of the world and each using animation in a distinctive way to tell stories about conflict.

*In This Corner of the World* is a Japanese film that revisits the horrors of the atomic bomb through the eyes of civilians. 'It's a coming-of-age story set in the shadow of immense destruction,' explains Leader. 'When it was released, it became a moment of national catharsis in Japan. The use of animation softens the blow while allowing the film to still be deeply affecting – it provides the necessary emotional distance that live-action might not have been able to achieve.'

'If you imagine real child actors being put through these devastating scenarios, the experience would be unbearable for the audience. But animation creates a space for viewers to process these traumatic events in a way that allows empathy without overwhelming them.'

Raymond Briggs' British classic *When the Wind Blows* uses Briggs' well-known storybook style to explore the grim aftermath of nuclear war. 'Briggs is famous for his work on *The Snowman*, but *When the Wind Blows* is a very different beast,' says Leader. 'It's a devastating portrait of an elderly couple who are woefully unprepared for the realities of a nuclear attack. Briggs subverts his usual charming illustrations, warping them into something far more harrowing as the film progresses.'

The third film, *Unicorn Wars*, offers a wildly different take on war. A Spanish animation drawing from contemporary graphic and tattoo culture, it juxtaposes cute anthropomorphised characters with brutal, psychedelic imagery. 'This is a film that lures you in with its bright, bold visuals,' Leader says, 'but what unfolds is a devastating exploration of indoctrination, dehumanisation, and the psychological costs of conflict.'



↑ *In This Corner of the World*, 2016, director Sunao Katabuchi

← *When The Wind Blows*, 1986, director Jimmy T. Murakami

'It's provocative,' he admits, 'and far more stylised than the other films in the series, but it packs a serious punch. *Unicorn Wars* uses cuteness to disarm us, and then shows us the violence these characters inflict on one another.'

*Animation at War* is a testament to the power of animation as an art form capable of tackling difficult and harrowing subjects. As Programme Manager Jonathan Gleneadie says: 'This series takes war seriously. Given the current national and global situation, it's a topic that requires a serious approach, and animation allows us to explore these realities in a way that live-action cinema often cannot.'

## Animation At War

2025 Cinemas



# Past, Present, Future. Every Minute Counts.

**Barbican Cinema Curator Sonia Zadurian discusses the emotional impact of *We Live in Time* and just why the film will hit audiences so hard.**

Tobias (Andrew Garfield) is going through a divorce when he is hit by a car and ends up in hospital. It's not the usual recipe for romance, but luckily it was ambitious young chef Almut (Florence Pugh) who struck him. Almut waits by his side in the hospital to apologise and the two soon form a connection, leading to a relationship, which sets the stage for an epic story about the possibilities of life, the prospect of death and what it can mean to love.

By now, you'll likely have heard the film referred to as something of a tearjerker and of course it absolutely is. It wasn't long before I stopped bothering to wipe my eyes and instead decided to see what happens when a face is marinated in tears for 1hr 47mins. The emotional impact of the film is staggering, but as always, the question of why a thing happens is always more interesting than the thing itself.

The plotting of *We Live in Time* is non-linear, so we jump backwards and forwards in this love story; one minute in the past, the next in the future. It's finely tuned direction which you'd expect to produce something of a distancing effect, but instead the juxtaposition of these moments creates new meaning, fresh perspective, and a deeper emotional resonance, the kind that our usual linear experience rarely affords us.

The script is a real gem; sweet but not saccharine, gentle without ever dragging and unafraid to use humour when it's desperately needed. Wants, needs and fears are infinitely

relatable, and never more so than with the character of Almut. It isn't often that women in film, particularly mothers, are so roundly painted. Everything about Almut feels organic and true, from her backstory and the impact this has had on her development, to her passion for food and drive to compete in her field despite increasingly difficult circumstances. She loves Tobias and loves her daughter but is never simply 'lover' or 'mother', as none of us are.

Which brings us to the two performances anchoring our experience of the film. Garfield and Pugh are both as utterly charming and authentic feeling as you would expect. In lighter moments as well as darker ones, the pair embody their characters so completely that it's easy to forget you're watching two of the finest British actors of today work their magic.

## **We Live in Time**

From Fri 1 Jan Cinemas



## Cinema Dec-Jan

### **Rewriting the Rules: Pioneering Indian Cinema after 1970s**

3 Oct-12 Dec 2024, Cinemas

### **Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum Presents: Woman of the Dunes & Rear Window**

14 & 18 Dec, Cinema 3

### **Sine-Screen: Precarious Landscapes**

3 & 15 Dec, Cinema 3

### **Cinema Restored: Sarah Maldoror's Carnival Trilogy<sup>12\*</sup>**

Tue 17 Dec, Cinema 3

### **Silent Film & Live Music: Steamboat Bill, Jr<sup>U</sup>**

26 Jan 3pm, Cinema 1

### **New East Cinema: The Editorial Office + ScreenTalk**

24 Jan 6.30pm, Cinema 2

### **Cinema Restored: Frauen In Berlin with Goethe Institute and Open City Documentary Festival**

Thu 30 Jan, Cinema 3

### **Citra Sasmita Presents: Pather Panchali<sup>U</sup>**

Mon 10 Feb 2025, 18:10

### **My Twisted Valentine**

14 Feb, Cinema 2

### **Animation at War: In This Corner of the World**

Feb, Cinemas

### **Masterpieces of Iranian New Wave (1962-77)**

4-25 Feb, Cinemas

### **Royal Ballet & Opera**

Until 18 May, Cinemas

### **MET Opera Live in HD**

Until 3 May

### **National Theatre Live**

Ongoing

## **Regular Screenings**

Learn more about all of our regular screenings by visiting [barbican.org.uk/cinema](http://barbican.org.uk/cinema)

### **New Releases**

New films on our screens, from around the world, every Friday. Plus, our Mondays are magic: all new release films are £6\* as part of our Magic Monday deal.

### **Family Film Club**

11am every Saturday, Cinema 2. Enjoy family films from £2.50, plus show and tell introductions and free monthly workshops.

### **Parent and Baby Screenings**

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### **Relaxed Screenings**

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### **Pay What You Can Screenings**

Each Friday, one of our new release film screenings is PWYC. Simply pick the price you can pay. (£3-15)

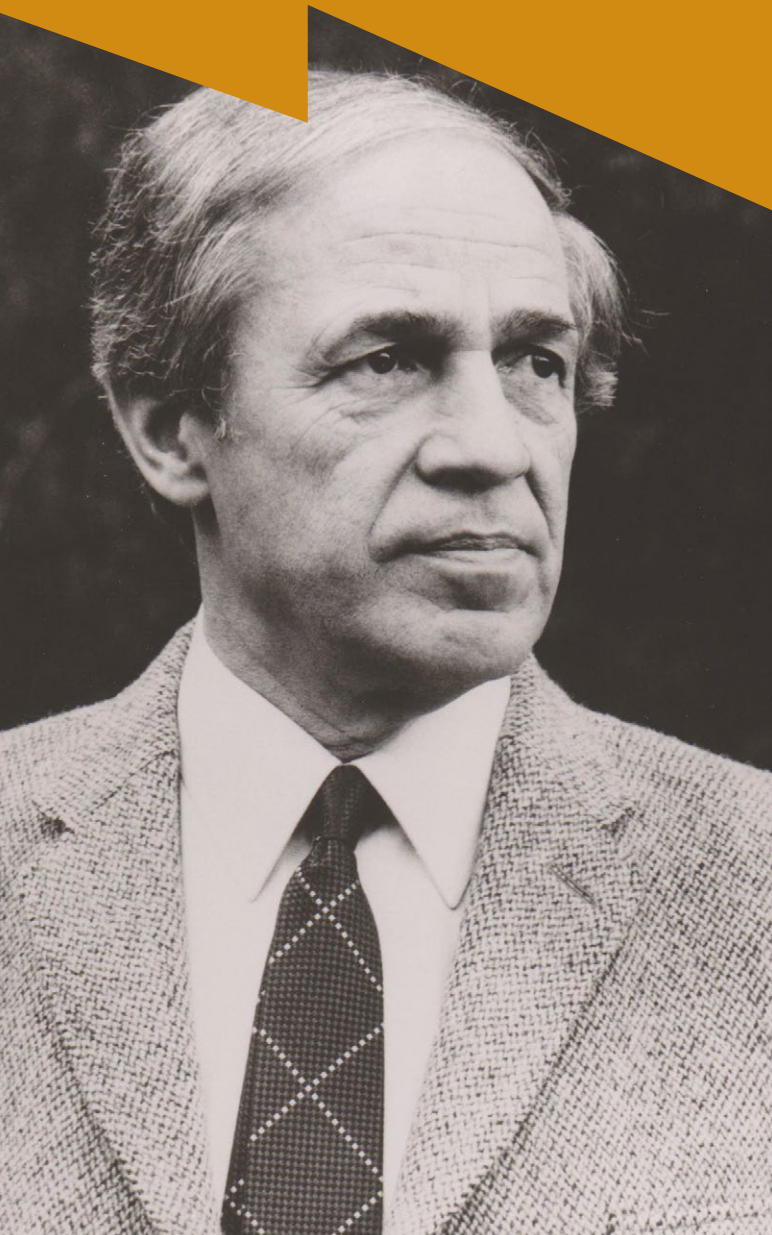
### **Senior Community Screenings**

Every other Monday 11am, Cinema 2. New release screenings for 60+ cinema goers and those who matter to you most.

### **Members' Screenings**

11am every Sunday, Cinema 2. New release screenings just for Members, £6

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### See concerts for less

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\*There's always an asterisk. In this case, there are a few exceptions – check the website for details.

← A season of concerts, talks and more explores the work of Pierre Boulez.

## The brilliance of Boulez

**It's no exaggeration to say that Pierre Boulez changed the face of European music. Head of Music, Helen Wallace, looks ahead to highlights from a forthcoming season celebrating the composer, illustrated by his statements.**

Pierre Boulez was no stranger to the Barbican: he conducted both the BBC Symphony (as Chief Conductor) and the London Symphony Orchestras here, and musicians and audiences still cherish the memory. A composer, conductor and polemicist, he's as famous for his contradictions as his contribution. Here's the man who wanted to 'blow up the opera houses', but conducted a landmark Ring Cycle; who deemed anyone not adopting 12-tone Serialism 'USELESS' while abandoning its strictures himself; who loved Balinese gamelan and hated Minimalism; who played in London's Roundhouse, pioneered electronic music, while exerting a sometimes stifling aesthetic orthodoxy over the next generation. His legacy was a visionary 'Cite de la musique' that has transformed Paris; luminous recordings of Debussy, Stravinsky, Mahler, and a string of glittering works that, in John Tavener's words, 'open a window into another world'.

### 'My work consists of spirals'

Boulez was famous for composing little, slowly, and often reworking earlier material. Much of his output consists of compositions to which he repeatedly returned, looping back and transforming them. It's no surprise his favourite gallery was New York's Guggenheim Museum. One such work is *Notations* (1945), eight explosive miniatures

for solo piano, performed by Tamara Stefanovich. He later developed some for orchestra, encrusting them with shimmering instrumentation.

### LSO Futures: Homage to Pierre Boulez

26 Jan 7pm, Hall

### BBC SO Total Immersion: Boulez at the BBC

30 Mar All day, Hall

### 'Violence, shock, life'

Emerging from occupied France in 1945, Boulez was the ultimate Angry Young Man, determined to destroy the cultural past. 'Violence, shock, life' were words he used to describe his own art and impetus, embodied by the visceral, shattering Piano Sonata No. 2, and implied in *explosante...fixe* and *Eclat*. The idea of a sonic combustion and its aftermath was an obsession, explored with forensic intensity in *Eclat*, which Sir Simon Rattle will conduct with the LSO. Boulez writes for an array of instruments with differing resonance decay times, allowing the conductor to 'create' parts of the score through in-the-moment decisions.

### LSO: Boulez, Benjamin & Brahms

9 Jan 7pm, Hall



### 'The human mind is able to do more work than Minimalism demands'

Boulez's attitude to his audiences was always to challenge, never ingratiate. *Pli selon pli* (1957) is his longest and, for many, his greatest work. Its title is its structure: by unfurling 'fold by fold' he reveals a portrait of the Symbolist poet Mallarmé, the poetry sung by a moonlit soprano, whose voice becomes another sonority in the texture. It's a meticulously devised garden of spangling musical textures, whose discontinuities and minutely measured resonances refuse to coalesce into any groove or linear narrative, but which offers an intoxicating hall of mirrors in which to wander.

#### **BBC SO Total Immersion: Boulez at the BBC**

**30 Mar** 7pm, Hall

### 'The evolution of instruments has come to a disastrous halt'

In 1977, Boulez founded IRCAM, a lab for electro-acoustic music, which he saw as opening a new future for music. Some of his electro-acoustic works stand out, but all involve old instruments and live performance: the dramatic *Anthemes II* (1997), an incredible spatialisation of a solo violin piece onto a vast sonic canvas, and will be performed by the LSO Chamber Ensemble in January. Then there's the *Dialogue de l'ombre double* for clarinet and tape (1985), where the 'shadow' clarinet projects human virtuosity into an alternate dimension.

#### **LSO Chamber Ensemble**

**27 Jan** 7.30pm, Milton Court

#### **BBC SO Total Immersion: Boulez at the BBC**

**30 Mar** 3pm, Milton Court

### 'With steel drums you can modify the sound which approaches electronic sounds'

Boulez was fascinated by non-Western music, from Andean harps to Balinese gamelan. His dazzling *Sur Incises* (1994) combines three pianos, three harps, and an array of percussion to externalise the piano's inner life. The bending, processed-sounding sonorities of the steel pans show how Boulez's experience with electronics refreshed his acoustic ideas. It's a feat of breath-taking virtuosity, to be delivered by the group he formed, Ensemble intercontemporain.

#### **Sur Incises, Ensemble intercontemporain with Cassie Kinoshi**

**27 May** 7.30pm, Hall

### 'Embrace delirium and organise it'

For all his commitment to taking forward the serialism of Anton Webern, Boulez adored the freedom and sensuousness of Debussy's art, as is clear from the programmes he conducted. Perhaps his great achievement was to bring together those two approaches, constructing order from 'delirium'. Nowhere is this clearer than in the intoxicating *Messagesquise* (1976) for seven cellos, which began life as a piece for solo viola. It moves from a teeming tracery of alien percussive sounds to a frenzied canon of dizzying scales.

#### **LSO Chamber Ensemble**

**27 Jan** 7.30pm, Milton Court

→ Khatia Buniatishvili will perform three concerts as part of her Artist Spotlight  
©Esther Haase

# Versatility is the key

## Khatia Buniatishvili's Artist Spotlight season promises to share the breadth and versatility of not only the renowned pianist's skills, but the instrument's too.

Known for her passionate performances and interpretations of Romantic and modern repertoire, Khatia Buniatishvili is a familiar face on our stage, so we are delighted to have her as an Artist Spotlight.

The series opens in December with a performance of two later Mozart concertos that feature on her latest album, accompanied by the Academy of St Martin in the Fields. She says the tonality of Concerto No. 20 in D minor shows 'a character of Mozart that isn't as present in his previous years. He covered pain with humour and joy of life, but in D minor, he let the emotion just be. This tonality is very special for me.' She has paired it with a very different concerto - No. 23 in A major, 'a classic that everybody loves - particularly the second movement - but also the way it's constructed. You can be in a moment of sparkling mood, and then the second movement comes and you cannot breathe anymore, because there's something painfully beautiful in it. I find it irresistible.'

On her album *Mozart*, she performed without a conductor, which she says 'was an absolute necessity to find the simplicity in the music,' emphasising the connection she sought with each musician. 'I had to find a way that was subtle, so we could find each other without trying to change each other.' She says this approach allowed for a deeper musical connection, one rooted in mutual understanding and shared interpretation.

This Artist Spotlight series also features a performance in April with her sister, fellow pianist Gvantsa. She says the two have

and extraordinary bond, which verges on telepathic communication.

'When people hear us together, they sometimes think there is only one person playing because we're so in harmony. She knows everything without me saying anything... it's just very natural.'

The final concert of her Artist Spotlight series is in June.

Performing in London holds deep significance for Buniatishvili, who now considers the Barbican a kind of home. 'I love performing at the Barbican,' she says. 'I find the public so relaxed... there's always a new wave of people coming. England always feels like a surprise to me, and I love that. It's refreshing, and I feel that energy when I play here.'

#### **Khatia Buniatishvili Artist Spotlight**

**9 Dec-12 Jun**



# Classical music

Dec-Jan

## LSO Discovery Family Concert

1 Dec 2.30pm, Hall

## Her Stories with Samantha Ege

1 Dec 4pm, Milton Court

## Sō Percussion and Caroline Shaw

1 Dec 8.30pm, Hall

## Autumn Opera Scenes

2 & 3 Dec 7pm, Silk Street Theatre

## Stephen Hough

4 Dec 7.30pm, Hall

## Abel Selaocoe and BBC Singers: Christmas From Around the World

5 Dec 7.30pm, Milton Court

## BBC SO and Yeol Eum Son: Prokofiev's Second Piano Concerto

6 Dec 7.30pm, Hall

## Guildhall Studio Ensemble

6 Dec 7.30pm, Milton Court

## Junior Guildhall Symphony Orchestra

7 Dec 6pm, Milton Court

## Christmas with Connaught Brass

8 Dec 4pm, Milton Court

## Khatia Buniatishvili and Academy of St Martin in the Fields

9 Dec 7.30pm, Hall

## London Symphony Orchestra/ Sir Antonion Pappano: Puccini's La rondine

10-12 Dec 7pm, Hall

## BBC SO/Sakari Oramo: Elgar's The Dream of Gerontius

13 Dec 7.30pm, Hall

## SANSARA Choir and United Strings of Europe: Sanctuary & Solidarity

14 Dec 7.30pm, Milton Court

## London Symphony Orchestra/ Sir Antonio Pappano: Vaughan Williams, Elgar & Bax

15 Dec 7pm, Hall

## Academy of Ancient Music

16 Dec 7pm, Hall

## London Symphony Orchestra/ Sir Antonio Pappano: Christmas Swing, with Frank Dupree and Sérgio Pires

18 & 19 Dec 7pm, Hall

## National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain: Illuminate

4 Jan 7pm, Hall

## London Symphony Orchestra: Half Six Fix – Brahms (with Sir Simon Rattle)

8 Jan 6.30pm, Hall

## London Symphony Orchestra/ Sir Simon Rattle: Boulez, Benjamin & Brahms, with Barbara Hannigan

9 Jan 7pm, Hall

## London Symphony Orchestra/ Sir Simon Rattle: Tippett, Turnage & Vaughan Williams

12 Jan 7pm, Hall

## Simon Bolivar Symphony Orchestra / Dudamel: Mahler 3

15 Jan 7.30pm, Hall

All information correct at the time of press. For the most up to date information, see [barbican.org.uk](http://barbican.org.uk)

 Resident Orchestra

→ Carducci Quartet  
©Tom Barnes

## Simon Bolivar Symphony Orchestra / Dudamel: Odisea

16 Jan 7.30pm, Hall

## BBC Symphony Orchestra: Wild Isles Live in Concert

18 Jan 7pm, Hall

## Britten Sinfonia with Chris Thile

23 Jan 7.30pm, Hall

## BBC Symphony Orchestra: Oramo conducts Mahler's Tenth and The Lark Ascending

24 Jan 7.30pm, Hall

## London Symphony Orchestra – LSO Futures: Homage to Pierre Boulez

26 Jan 7pm, Hall

## Boulez 100: The Boulez Effect

27 Jan 4.30pm, Milton Court

## LSO Chamber Ensemble: Boulez 100

27 Jan 7.30pm, Milton Court

## Carducci Quartet: Shostakovich Quartets: Intimate Portraits, Part 1

29 Jan 7.30pm, Milton Court

## BBC Symphony Orchestra: Hrůša conducts Beethoven and Shostakovich

31 Jan 7.30pm, Hall





# Contemporary music

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# Travel back to the golden age of Somali music

**Revel in the funk and disco sounds of 1980s Mogadishu when one of the foremost acts of the time hits our stage.**

There was a time when the Somali capital Mogadishu was called the 'Pearl of the Indian Ocean' – a cosmopolitan centre where Italian and Arab architecture lined the coast, and the city's nightlife thrived, fuelled by an eclectic music scene. Venues such as lavish hotel ballrooms transformed into live music halls, where bands like Dur Dur, Ifiin, and Sharero created a distinctly Somali sound, blending funk, disco, soul, and traditional Somali music.

And while the brutal civil war means that time is over, there's an opportunity to travel back to the time, when Dur Dur Band International brings the pulse of Mogadishu's golden music era to the Barbican.

At this special show, Dur Dur Band will be joined by an exciting guest line-up, bringing together a new generation of singer/songwriters with some absolute legends – for an international coming together of heavyweight Somali musicians.

Originally formed in the late 1970s, Dur Dur Band quickly became one of Somalia's most beloved groups, celebrated for their energetic, genre-blending sound that captured the spirit of a bustling city and a vibrant era of music.

In the 1980s, Dur Dur Band was at the forefront of this cultural renaissance, known for its soulful melodies, infectious rhythms, and bold musical experiments that resonated with Somali audiences. Yet the onset of civil war in the early 1990s disrupted Somalia's thriving music scene. Forced to disband by the war, the members scattered across the globe, and

the vibrant spaces they once performed in fell silent. However, Dur Dur Band's legacy endures through cherished recordings that offer a snapshot of pre-war Mogadishu's musical richness.

Today, Dur Dur Band International, led by original members and featuring vocalist Fadumina Hilowle, keeps this legacy alive. Their performance here will evoke memories of Somalia's golden age of music and introduce new audiences to the electric sounds of Mogadishu's nightlife. For many in the Somali diaspora, Dur Dur Band's music is a bridge to that beautiful, cosmopolitan past. As NTS radio host and vocalist Fauzia notes: 'Dur Dur Band are a big part of my heritage and remind a lot of us of a beautiful time in Somalia.'

This concert offers a unique opportunity to experience the band's signature fusion of traditional Somali music with funk, disco, and soul – a sound that not only brought joy to Mogadishu's locals but also resonated globally, as Somali artists gained international recognition. With their infectious rhythms and soulful harmonies, Dur Dur Band International continues to showcase the beauty and resilience of Somali music.

## Dur Dur Band

5 Dec 8pm, Hall

← Dur Dur Band bring a flavour of 1980s Mogadishu to our Hall.

# Warm songs under a cold moon

**Under the glow of December's Cold Moon, Irish singer-songwriter Lisa O'Neill comes to our Hall for a mesmerising performance with the Britten Sinfonia.**

The so-called 'Cold Moon', the final full moon of the year, will provide a contrast to the warmth of this special evening, where O'Neill's raw, evocative folk songs will be reimagined for orchestra. Drawing on the moon's symbolism, she says: 'The Cold Moon is symbolic of a death and rebirth cycle and is otherwise known as the Long Night Moon. [For this concert] We will visit songs from my studio albums, *Same Cloth or Not*, *Pothole in the Sky*, *Heard a Long Gone Song*, and *All of This is Chance*, and we may even introduce some new beginnings as we reach the end of another year.'

For O'Neill, this night is something of a dream come true, rooted in her love for symphonic music. She says her first experience of hearing orchestral sounds was while watching the film *E.T.*: 'In my innocence, I had no knowledge of strings and horns, of keys and drums. I didn't know composers or conductors existed. I didn't know that John Williams or Steven Spielberg existed, but *ET* did exist. Thinking back on it now, how and why as children we were all so immensely moved and impacted by this alien's flight via the moon, I am convinced it was the music, it was the vibrations of the symphony that pulled at our heartstrings and gave us wings and left an imprint of awe in us. It was not digital. It was the real thing. Real things have lasting effects. Music is, after all, a universal language, with or without words it has the

power to transport us on a cellular level to the celestial heavens and the underworlds.'

Now, she has the opportunity to give her own songwriting the symphonic treatment, thanks to a collaboration with multi-instrumentalist Terry Edwards. 'I never dreamed then, that I would someday become a songwriter... or that someone would someday write a score for songs that began as tiny seeds in my human heart,' she says. Edwards has written an orchestral score for a selection of O'Neill's original songs, weaving folk with symphonic elements to create a stirring and atmospheric performance.

For O'Neill, music is a universal language, and this performance is a return to the awe she first felt as a child. 'It was the music, it was the vibrations of the symphony that pulled at our heartstrings... and left an imprint of awe in us.' Under the Cold Moon, O'Neill's voice and the Britten Sinfonia's sound will merge to create a powerful emotional journey through the human heart.

## **Lisa O'Neill with Britten Sinfonia: Symphony for the Cold Moon**

11 Dec 8pm, Hall

→ Lisa O'Neill will perform songs from her back catalogue, reimagined for orchestra.



## Contemporary music Dec-Jan

### **Dur Dur Band**

5 Dec 8pm, Hall

### **Lisa O'Neill with Britten Sinfonia**

11 Dec 8pm, Hall

### **Unsound x Barbican**

17 Jan 7.30pm, Hall

### **Lloyd Cole**

25 Jan 8pm, Hall

### **Nigel Kennedy**

29 Jan 7.30pm, Hall

### **Alceu Valença & Orquestra Ouro Preto**

30 Jan 8pm, Hall

All information correct at the time of press.  
For the most up to date information, see [barbican.org.uk](http://barbican.org.uk)



# Theatre & dance

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\*Subject to availability

# From midwinter to a magical midsummer night

Head to the spellbinding world of Shakespeare's classic comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – it's a perfect winter warmer to brighten up the dark nights.

It may be winter outside, but inside our Theatre, summer is about to bloom – though not quite as you'd expect. The Royal Shakespeare Company's (RSC) production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* promises to offer a fresh take on Shakespeare's timeless comedy. Director Eleanor Rhode's production delves deep into the subconscious layers of the play, embracing its darker edges while infusing it with inventive theatrical techniques and real stage magic.

'I've leaned into the dream aspect of it quite heavily,' she says. Rather than sticking to the familiar tropes of lovers frolicking through a romantic forest, she is aiming for something more challenging and unsettling. 'It's never been a true forest in my head, in terms of where the lovers run off to. It's somewhere scarier, leaning more into the subconscious.'

To conjure this fantastical world, Rhode deploys stage magic – real, old-school theatrical illusions, seamlessly integrated into the narrative. She teamed up with renowned illusionist John Bulleid to craft these magical moments. Bullied, a member of the Magic Circle, has brought his expertise to the table, creating illusions that feel both timeless and

contemporary. 'I've always been fascinated by how you combine magic with narrative,' she says. 'The beats of a magic trick are almost identical to the structure of a story – it's all about the reveal.'

For the director, this collaboration has been one of the highlights of the production process: 'When we hit a challenge, we'll have four or five people from the creative or technical team sitting around, solving it together. That's the most exciting part of making the work, when all these different elements cross-pollinate.'

In addition to the innovative use of stagecraft, the production is also breaking new ground in terms of accessibility. For the first time, live audio description will be available at every performance. 'We've worked with Ben Wilson, an incredible practitioner, to bring audio description into the heart of the show,' she explains. Unlike traditional audio description, where a separate narrator describes the visual elements for the visually impaired, the actors themselves will perform the descriptions in character. 'It's like having a partner in crime right in your ear,' she says. 'It feels more intimate, like someone's guiding you through the action, rather than a distant, neutral voice. It's creative, it's funny, and it's really exciting to be able to offer that experience every night.'

This unique approach to accessibility is part of a broader effort to ensure that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is an inclusive experience for all audience members.

← Rosie Sheehy as Puck in the Royal Shakespeare Company's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, performed at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. Photo by Pamela Raith © RSC.



## Theatre & dance

### Dec-Jan

#### Unwrapped: A Midsummer Night's Dream

18 Jan 10.30am, Theatre

#### RSC: A Midsummer Night's Dream

3 Dec-18 Jan Various times, Theatre

#### First Light

5-19 Dec Various times, The Pit

#### Insight into A Midsummer Night's Dream

16 Jan 10.30am, Theatre

#### MimeLondon

##### La Manéchine

14-18 Jan Various times, The Pit

##### Moby Dick

22-25 Jan Various times, Theatre

##### Not a Word

21-25 Jan Various times, The Pit

##### Frau Trapp – Five Lines

28 Jan-1 Feb Various times, The Pit

↖ Matthew Baynton as Bottom in Royal Shakespeare Company's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, performed at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. Photo by Pamela Raith © RSC.

↓ Plexus Polaire's *Moby Dick*. Photo by Christophe Raynaud de Lage.

All information correct at the time of press. For the most up to date information, see [barbican.org.uk](http://barbican.org.uk)

'We wanted to make sure that everyone could fully engage with the show.

It's about making theatre more open and immersive for everyone,' says Rhode. 'And the fact that the actors are doing the descriptions themselves just makes it even more fun - it adds another layer to the performance.'

At its core, however, the production remains deeply rooted in the universal appeal of Shakespeare's characters. 'The lovers, the fairies, and the mechanicals - they're all well-meaning but flawed,' says Rhode. 'The key is that these are people who are really at the edge of their abilities, stumbling through something chaotic. You see their vulnerabilities, and that makes them more relatable.' The director's focus on the humanity of Shakespeare's characters allows the audience to see themselves in the story. 'There's something about seeing people struggle and get through it that

resonates. They might not always know what they're doing, but that's what makes them so compelling.'

That this production is being staged in winter only enhances the sense of warmth and connection that the creative team aims to create. 'Winter is the perfect time to hunker down and tell a good story,' says Rhode. 'It's a time for people to be clasped together in a room, sharing an experience. I want the audience to come out buzzing, talking about the show, especially when it's cold and miserable outside.' The contrast between the wintry weather and the playful, dreamlike world on stage creates a unique atmosphere, making this the perfect seasonal treat.

#### RSC: A Midsummer Night's Dream

3 Dec-18 Jan Various times, Theatre

**AD CAP TT REL**





# Immerse yourself in cutting-edge performances

**MimeLondon directors Helen Lannaghan and Joseph Seelig share highlights from the forthcoming season of contemporary visual theatre.**

For five decades, the London International Mime Festival showcased the best visual theatre from around the world. Now, directors Helen Lannaghan and Joseph Seelig, have a new project – MimeLondon – which continues their incredible legacy.

The two are passionate about this visual and creative art form. 'It's always a surprise... it's never conventional,' Seelig says.

Lannaghan adds, 'What makes this kind of work so special is that it allows you to dream more. The audience isn't just passive – they're actively engaging with the show in a way that's different from traditional theatre.' With its diverse lineup of productions, each offering a fresh perspective on storytelling, MimeLondon 2025 promises an immersive experience that will leave audiences thinking long after the curtain falls.

Among the highlights is Plexus Polaire's *Moby Dick*, marking its highly-anticipated London premiere. 'They've moved from small-scale to large-scale work, which is fantastic for them and for us,' says Lannaghan, adding, 'It features over 50 puppets, including a life-sized whale. It's really a spectacle.'

Seelig says the power of puppetry brings Melville's classic story to life: 'You might think, "How do you portray *Moby Dick* with puppets?" But that's the magic of it. The story of obsession, revenge, and nature is brought to life in a way that's utterly captivating.' Through a combination of puppetry, live music, and video projections this immersive journey into Captain Ahab's doomed quest for the great white whale comes to life in a totally new way.

*La Manéchine* by La Pendue is a stark retelling of Grimm story *The Girl Without Hands*. Lannaghan describes it as 'quite a dark fairy tale'. It's about a miller who unwittingly offers his daughter to the Devil.

But when the Devil can't take her because she's too pure, he demands her hands instead.' Despite its nature, the show blends puppetry, shadow puppets, and live music to create a captivating theatrical experience.

Lannaghan says La Pendue's storytelling showcases the unique ability of puppetry to tackle complex narratives in a visually compelling way. 'They use a mix of different puppetry styles to create this beautiful and haunting atmosphere. The story might be dark, but it's also full of creativity and depth.'

Irish theatre company Brú Theatre presents *Not a Word*, a moving tribute to the Irish navvies who emigrated to foreign lands, only to disappear into history.

Performed by Raymond Keane, this one-man show uses physical theatre, mask, and live music to tell the story of these forgotten workers. 'It's a very moving story,' Seelig says, noting the play's deep emotional resonance. 'It's about an Irish labourer who emigrates, works himself to exhaustion, and fades away – like so many who left their homes in search of a better life.'

The play is accompanied by live music, combining electronic and traditional sounds to underscore the poignant narrative.

'Even though it's set in the past, the story of migration and displacement is incredibly relevant today,' says Lannaghan. 'It's a tribute to the quiet dignity of these workers.'

The final production, *Five Lines* by Frau Trapp, transports audiences into a dystopian future where greed has driven society underground. 'It's a post-apocalyptic story, but at its core, it's about love and survival,' Lannaghan says. The show's innovative use of micro-cinema techniques, where a miniature camera captures live action on stage, adds a unique visual dimension to the production.

'It's small-scale, and it's incredibly powerful,' says Seelig. 'The combination of live animation and real-time filmmaking creates an experience that's both immersive and thought-provoking.'

This year's shows reaffirms MimeLondon's commitment to showcasing the very best in contemporary visual theatre.

Whether through large-scale puppetry, intimate micro-cinema, or evocative physical theatre, this is an ideal way to start your 2025 off right.

## MimeLondon

14 Jan–1 Feb Various times



← Brú Theatre's *Not a Word*. Photo by Emilijah Jefremova.

← La Pendue's *La Manéchine*. Photo by Le Monde D'Aurore.

# Prose, community and expression

**Our Barbican Young Poets scheme is an artist development initiative and community for people wanting to explore what's possible for their poetry and creative expression. Poet and creative facilitator Katie O'Pray was among the most recent cohort and – ahead of the publication of the BYP anthology – tells us about their experiences.**

'At the time of applying for Barbican Young Poets (BYP), I felt I had been lacking a solid network of fellow writers, who were navigating similar grounds. I was craving a space in which I could be challenged, critiqued, inspired, supported, surprised. The programme has fulfilled this, providing opportunities to receive feedback on my work and to strengthen my own editorial voice when offering feedback to others. I've received advice from peers and mentors on a range of concerns – from approaches to my writing, editing and performing practices, to correctly doing my taxes as a freelance creative. Ultimately, I've connected with other poets, with whom I'll share mutual encouragement and excitement always.'

O'Pray wrote a poem called *In my slice of city* for our latest BYP anthology. 'The Barbican and I weren't familiar with each other before BYP,' they say. 'Each time I came to the estate for a session, I would spend some time exploring different parts. Eventually, I felt at home among the distinctive architecture and developed a favourite spot, behind St Giles' church. Applying ideas around noticing, connection and mundanity discussed in BYP sessions, I found myself

writing about it. It became meaningful to me to sit in this spot in varying weathers and degrees of light, feeling both anonymous and a part of something larger. It's one of many poems I produced during my time as a BYP and feels an appropriate way to commemorate it.'

**Find out more about BYP and all our programmes for young creatives by scanning the QR code:**



→ ©James Drury

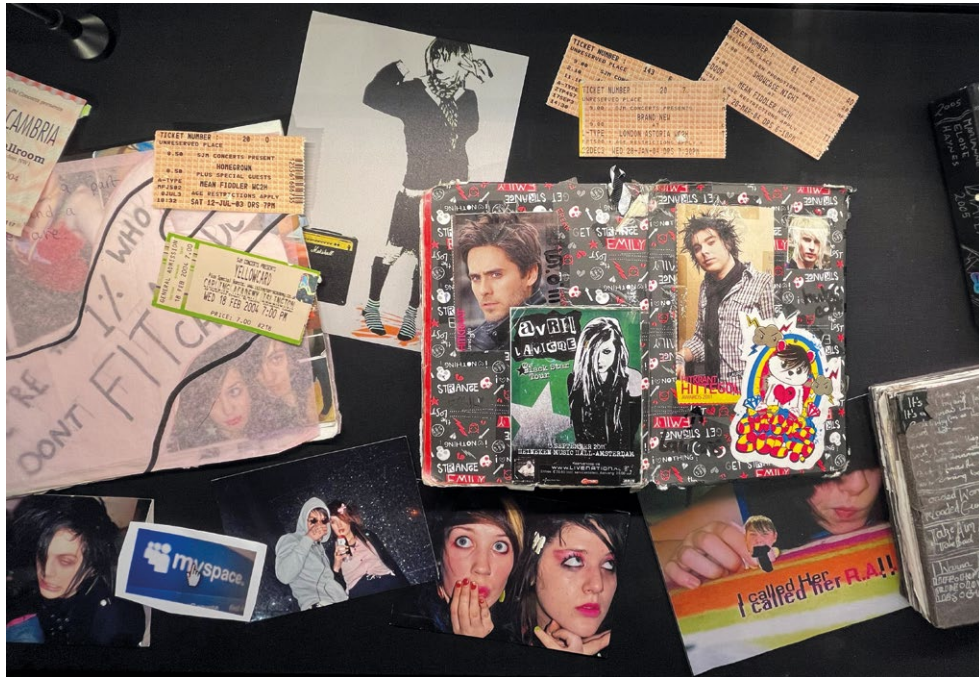
## In my slice of city

I haven't spoken aloud all day. I have ventured 60 miles to now, where I'm among some well-thought-out benches, a homogenous brickwork pavement. Blossom flocking the trees; coveted, ripe & bulbous, touching hues with the sky. A creek is audible, uninterested in the rising value of its banks. Nobody seems to mind me, in my slice of city, tucked behind the church's back. The ruins of a wall imply a history worth preserving. I wonder about this density of people, the ancient masonry, surrounding windows, little boxed-up lives. Laundry & lamps & mutual overlookedness. I wonder about the mother lugging groceries past me, teaching her daughter beauty. To gather petals please, no feathers, no leaves. Scattered gardens are wriggling with workers & groups laughing in thin jackets, sucking at the last dregs of dusk. Its peachy settle. There's a couple taking photos with long technical lenses. Lily pads. Reflections. My face opened up toward the skyscrapers, unoccupied by its usual thoughts. I am not alone. I am not alone in my appreciation of this moment, these brief fruits of a meagre winter. There's an ephemeral mood about, like many heads tuning into the same happy thought. The streetlamp begins to nag. Signs of life moving from the ground to the birdsong, into the vast flight paths. Light blooming up the ribs of the tower blocks.



# Emo forever

**With one foot IRL and the other in MySpace, Emo wasn't just a scene – it was the only way of living, as an extraordinary exhibition by the Museum of Youth Culture shows.**



If you're feeling nostalgic for the days of side fringes, skinny jeans, and eyeliner, a new exhibition *I'm Not Okay: An Emo Retrospective* is one not to miss. This collaboration with the Museum of Youth Culture delves into the emo scene of the 2000s, exploring its lasting cultural impact through a striking collection of photographs, memorabilia, and personal stories. As Jamie Brett, one of the curators of the exhibition, explains: 'We knew that emo was the next scene we had to look at because it was the missing link on the timeline of youth culture.'

The exhibition captures the essence of the emo movement, a scene that blended

music with a burgeoning online culture. 'What makes emo so interesting is that it was really the first subculture to embrace the internet,' says Brett. 'It was a scene that happened online just as much as it did in real life – on Myspace, LiveJournal, and early social media platforms.' Delving into this blend of digital and physical spaces, contributions from the public add a personal touch to the show. The curators put out a call for submissions, asking people to share their memories, photos, and even screenshots of long-lost Myspace profiles. The response was overwhelming, with over 1,400 submissions flooding in.

'We've never had a reaction like that before,' Brett says. 'It shows how much emo still means to people.'

'A lot of these photos are tiny – old Myspace selfies or snapshots of gigs – and we've had to get creative in how we display them.' The exhibition features these images in a collage style, using CRT monitor effects to maintain their pixelated charm.

The emo scene of the 2000s has often been overlooked in the evolution of youth culture, but for many, it was life-changing. 'For people who grew up in that scene, it wasn't just about the music – it was about identity, community, and self-expression,' says Brett.

What makes *I'm Not Okay* so relevant today is the way it bridges the gap between emo and the current generation. 'You see a lot of emo influences in Gen Z and even Gen Alpha,' Brett notes. 'The gothic aesthetic, the emotional openness – it's all still there, but in a different form.'

Looking back, emo's influence is perhaps more significant than it's often given credit for. 'A lot of what was considered 'alternative' back then has become mainstream today,' says Brett.

'Emo was more than just a trend – it was a way of life for a lot of people. And I think this exhibition really captures that.'

## **I'm Not Okay: An Emo Retrospective**

**Until 15 Jan** Library

# Feast on the flavours of the season

**Looking for festive food this winter? We've got you.**



Indulge in festive flavours at the Barbican's restaurants this season, where holiday-inspired specials bring a delicious twist to classic favourites. The Barbican Kitchen is serving up a traditional Christmas lunch: enjoy a beautifully rolled and stuffed turkey roast with all the trimmings—roast potatoes and seasonal vegetables—a perfect way to enjoy the holiday spirit over lunch. If you're in the mood for something more adventurous, try their Christmas pizza, topped with turkey breast, sage and onion stuffing, and pigs in blankets.

Warm up with a glass of mulled wine or a rich hot chocolate, also available at the Barbican Kitchen. For those looking to kick back with a seasonal drink, the Martini Bar has unveiled a selection of winter cocktail specials that are sure to make spirits bright. And don't miss the Bar & Grill's limited-edition turkey burger, a festive twist on a classic burger, perfect for a hearty, flavourful meal.

Whether you're attending a concert or simply in the mood for a festive bite, the Barbican's dining options offer something for every taste this holiday season. Treat yourself and experience the seasonal cheer through these delicious, warming dishes.

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↑ © Rachel Shnapp.

→ The Royal Shakespeare Company's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, performed at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. Photo by Pamela Raith © RSC.





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