

barbican



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Book tickets for all events online at barbican.org.uk

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Accessible events

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

Accessible tickets

Join our Access Membership scheme to book accessible tickets and tell us about any access requirements, plus receive our dedicated access newsletter.

For more information about accessibility at the Barbican, visit 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, as well as 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 Spring at the Barbican

In this spirit, we invite you into a season of programming from 6 Feb – 11 May, offering opportunities to gather, learn and grow. Taking inspiration from our new major exhibition focussing on the work of the late American artist Noah Davis, whose paintings celebrated the power of art to elevate the everyday, we have a wide-range of programming in the ethos of renewal and gathering. Davis demonstrated this concept beautifully in the creation of the Underground Museum in East Los Angeles – a space for artists and his local community to come together. His ethos of making arts accessible to everyone can be found across the Centre through events ranging from films to talks, to recitals.

Highlights include jazz pianist Jason Moran, who will pay direct tribute to Davis with a concert inspired by one of his canvasses; an in-gallery talk with award-winning poet and writer Claudia Rankine; participatory painting opportunities; and our Young Barbican Takeover.

We're also thrilled to extend the hours of our Conservatory, meaning you can visit on Friday and Sunday evenings, as part of this Concrete Garden mini-season. The lush, green oasis provides the perfect backdrop for a series of talks, workshops, and other engaging events planned over the coming months. It's also a serene space to simply unwind among 1,500 species of plants.

In this same spirit of transformation, in Visual Arts we host the debut UK solo exhibition by Indonesian artist Citra Sasmita. *Into Eternal Land* takes you on a symbolic, multi-sensory journey exploring ideas of ancestral memory, ritual and migration.

In the Theatre, we welcome the return of Cate Blanchett and Tom Burke in Duncan Macmillan and Thomas Ostermeier's sold-out production of Chekhov's *The Seagull*, and Peruvian theatre company Teatro La Plaza's production of *Hamlet*. In The Pit, our programme of cutting-edge theatre invites audiences to see the world from fresh perspectives.

The boundary-breaking Fatoumata Diawara, shares her international Mali sound on a journey through Afrofuturism in our Hall. Plus, orchestral space rock pioneers Spiritualized will play their 1995 album *Pure Phase* in its entirety for a rare performance. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the death of composer Dmitri Shostakovich and a feast of incredible performers and orchestras will be sharing his work, including the Czech Philharmonic with Semyon Bychkov, our wonderful resident orchestra the London Symphony Orchestra, the Carducci Quartet, and the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

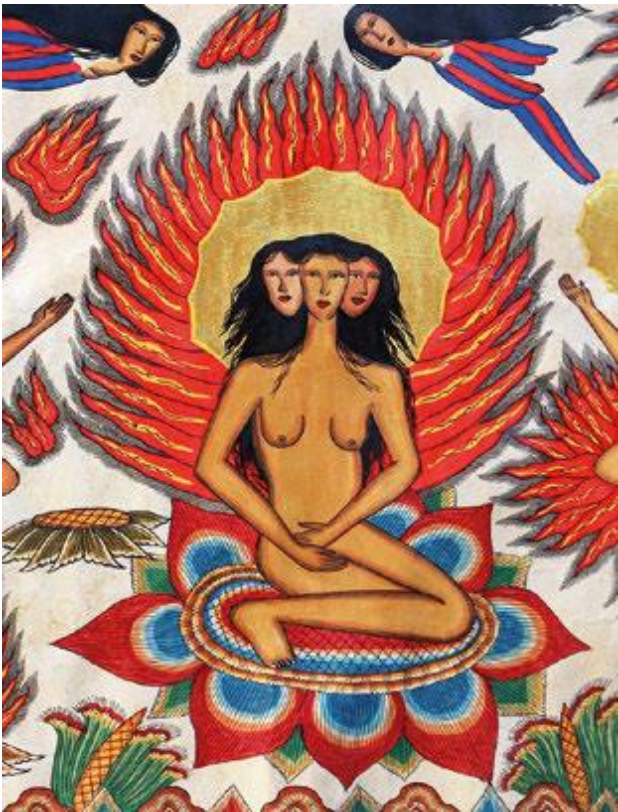
And baritone Davóne Tines shares the transformational experience he had while working on his new work about legendary singer, actor, and activist Paul Robeson.

That journey of storytelling extends to our cinemas in *Masterpieces of the Iranian New Wave*, curated by Ehsan Khoshbakht, alongside the latest new releases, incredible screen talks, Family Film Club and Senior Community Screenings.

Whether exploring our exhibitions, attending performances, or finding solace among the greenery of our Conservatory, this spring we invite you to experience moments of renewal, discovery, and inspiration.

Devyani Saltzman

Director for Arts & Participation



Citra Sasmita, *Act One*, (detail) 2024, from *Into Eternal Land, The Curve*, Barbican, 2025. © Citra Sasmita

Concrete Garden

Concrete Garden is our season of events inspired by Noah Davis's ethos of making arts accessible to everyone. The subject of our major new exhibition, Davis was passionate about the power of art to elevate the everyday. Here's what's coming up

Visit the Conservatory

Throughout the spring, explore our Conservatory which will be open until 11pm on Fridays, and 8pm on Sundays. Advance booking required.

9 Feb – 11 May

Season Butler: Speculative Fiction Writing Workshop

Downfall: It's over. An empire falls, a tree is felled, and spores disperse. Join Season Butler for this workshop about focus, tension, action and anticipation.

9 Feb 5pm, Garden Room, Conservatory

Imagining Worlds

Explore words and worlds at this day of pop-up readings, live events and workshops, nestled among the plants in our living, breathing conservatory.

9 Feb Conservatory

Fertile Ground

Step inside our tropical oasis for a day of readings, talks and workshops on plants and fertile ground.

23 Mar Conservatory

Experiments in Utopia

Step inside our iconic conservatory for a day of talks, performances and workshops centred around intentional community building.

27 Apr Conservatory

May Day

Come together and celebrate the traditional springtime festival in our iconic conservatory at a day of talks and workshops.

4 May Conservatory

Listening to Images

A day of readings, talks and workshops centred around Tina M Campt's idea of 'listening to images', exploring archives, personal histories and more. Plus, she'll join us in conversation at 2.30pm.

11 May Conservatory



Barbican Conservatory © Max Colson

More to explore in our Conservatory

We're opening this incredible space more often in spring, plus there are some fascinating programmes of events to uncover.

Our Conservatory is one of the City's hidden gems – packed with over 1,500 species of plants, it's a wonderful and peaceful place to revel in the delights of the natural world at springtime. And this season, there are more opportunities to discover this extraordinary place as we open every Friday evening and Sunday, when you can roam among the plants.

Plus, seeded throughout the spring, there will be a number of all-day events, including activities and workshops. These will be days filled with readings, talks and activations that everyone can participate in. Don't miss Fertile Ground on 23 March, when the Conservatory will be the base for a day of readings, talks and activations centred around the cycle of give and take in relation to the earth's natural resources. From Gaia theory to agricultural industry, and DIY workshops on making your own plants grow, we look to the origins of life and how we look after it against the backdrop of the living breathing system of the Barbican's own conservatory.

While on 27 April, Experiments in Utopia will explore the history and current evolution of intentional community building. Delve into topics ranging from the original utopian vision of 1970s Biodomes and the Barbican's own brutalist belonging, through to today's conscious communities. And on 4 May, May Day celebrates the coming of the light with an ode to Beltane among the thriving plants. With talks and workshops ranging from wellness rituals and flower arranging to collective song and dance, we celebrate unions, freedom and the joy of summer.

So this spring, make the most of one of London's most spectacular showcases of nature, right here in the Centre.

Immerse yourself in Noah Davis's practice

Join one of these events and be inspired by the American artist's ethos.

Writing Worlds

How do writers and artists create worlds and imagine new possibilities? Discover more at this panel discussion featuring guest speakers including Season Butler, Sarah Shin, Sammy Lee, and Chloe Aridjis.

9 Feb 2.30pm, Frobisher Auditorium 1

Home: Figure and Portrait Drawing Workshops

Express yourself freely and creatively at this figure and portrait drawing course that will encourage you to reflect on the themes of family and the home.

12 Feb – 16 Apr 6.30pm, Creative Collaboration Studio

F*Choir

The 60-strong queer-led ensemble redefines choral singing with bold, high-energy performances celebrating liberation, inclusivity, and the magic of collective voices.

21 Mar 7.30pm, Milton Court

Barbican Young Poets: In Response to Noah Davis

Join Barbican Young Poets alumni at this special performance inspired by the work of Noah Davis, in collaboration with poet Claudia Rankine.

28 Mar 7pm, Art Gallery

Listening Session: George Riley and special guests

Soak up the atmosphere in our gallery amongst Noah Davis's work at this listening session with singer George Riley.

1 Apr 7pm, Art Gallery

Home: Family Drawing Workshops

Draw, paint and collage at these fun family workshop sessions that explore what home and family means to you and your loved ones.

7–12 Apr 10am & 2pm, Fountain Room

Listening Session: Hannah Catherine Jones and the Chiron Choir

Led by Hannah Catherine Jones, Chiron Choir present a live set of somatic chants, vocal improvisations and compositions inspired by our Noah Davis exhibition.

15 Apr 7pm, Art Gallery

Liminal Chords: A Dreamscape in Verse & Sound – MA.MOYO (Belinda Zhawi) + friends

Poet and sound artist MA.MOYO (Belinda Zhawi) and friends, Roxanne Tataei & Marysia Osu, respond to the radical work of artist Noah Davis through poetry, vocal textures, and music.

23 Apr 7.30pm, Art Gallery

Jason Moran

Inspired by the late artist Noah Davis, composer and jazz pianist Jason Moran will perform a piano recital in which he creates a musical response to Davis's paintings, with major influence from Pueblo del Rio: Concerto.

9 May 7.30pm, Milton Court

In conversation: Black Worlding

A discussion about intersectional creativity, taking 'Black Worlding' as a jumping off point and inviting contemporary artists, musicians and cultural mavericks to respond.

11 May 12pm, Frobisher Auditorium 1

The public programme is supported by the US Embassy in London.



George Riley

'Art is for everyone'

Discover the work and practice of Noah Davis, the groundbreaking American artist we're celebrating this spring.

The late American artist Noah Davis understood the power of art to uplift others and believed art was for everyone. And we're honouring and celebrating that sentiment as we host the UK's first institutional survey of his work and practice.

The exhibition chronicles Davis's remarkable life and work, exploring his paintings, sculptures, curatorial projects, and the groundbreaking Underground Museum he co-founded in Los Angeles.

'Noah Davis was an artist in the most expansive sense,' says co-curator Wells Fray-Smith. 'While he was primarily a painter, he also made sculptures, curated exhibitions, and sought to create spaces where art could act as a vehicle to bring people together. This exhibition foregrounds him as one of the great painters of his generation, while also exploring the full breadth of his creative vision.'

Davis's talent for painting emerged early, and by high school his parents rented him his own painting studio so he would stop ruining the carpets at home. As a teenager, he was also already curating exhibitions in unusual spaces – he staged a show of reproductions of watercolours by one of his artistic heroes, Francesco Clemente, in a local shopping mall. After briefly studying at New York's Cooper Union, Davis moved to Los Angeles in 2004, a city that became central to his life and work.

'He was obsessed with the history of art, and the history of painting in particular,' says Fray-Smith. 'But he also deeply aware of its limitations. The 'canon' he admired – rich with figures like Édouard Manet and Caspar David Friedrich – featured predominantly white artists and subjects. Yet Davis didn't approach this with a sense of exclusion; he saw it as an opportunity to reimagine art history by centring Black figures and narratives in his work.'

Our major exhibition takes visitors on a chronological journey through Davis's career, from his earliest works in 2007 to his final paintings completed in 2015, when he died from a rare cancer aged just 32. Early works reveal a meticulous approach to paint, with tightly rendered compositions that seek out the uncanny or

majestic undertones of daily life. As Davis matured, his style loosened and became more experimental, often using paint to create recognisable images as well as seemingly-abstract surfaces. Fray-Smith notes, 'He began to use thin washes and veils of paint, allowing images to emerge and dissolve simultaneously. His works are incredibly rewarding because they invite viewers to look closely, to see beyond the image and look on and through the surface.'

Davis's work is best known for its focus on the everyday lives of individuals, depicted in ways that are both universal and deeply personal. Fray-Smith explains, 'Davis resisted that pressure to engage with images trauma and violence. Instead of addressing current events, he showed people in moments of quiet joy, introspection and connection.'

One notable work, *The Missing Link 6* (2013), exemplifies this approach. The monumental painting depicts a solitary figure reclining against a tree in a lush, dreamlike landscape. 'With loose gestural brushwork, it looks like it could have been painted by Manet,' says Fray-Smith. 'Davis painted the people Davis saw around him and in doing so addressed the histories of exclusion in painting, reimaging who gets to inhabit large-scale paintings.'

While his works often feel intimate, they are also open to interpretation. 'Davis was a master at giving you just enough to draw you in while withholding narrative detail to leave space for your own imagination,' Fray-Smith adds. 'His paintings aren't didactic; they encourage viewers to bring their own experiences and emotions into dialogue with the work.'

In addition to his artistic practice, Davis's legacy includes the Underground Museum, which he co-founded with his wife and fellow artist, Karon, in 2012. Located in Arlington Heights, a

predominantly Black and Latinx neighbourhood in Los Angeles, the museum was created to bring world-class art to a community that was underserved by cultural resources.

‘Davis always wanted to have an art space,’ says Fray-Smith. ‘He saw creativity as inseparable from who he was. The Underground Museum was born out of this vision and out of a small inheritance left by his father, who encouraged him to “do good” with it.’

The museum occupied four adjacent storefronts previously used as a church and a pupusería (a shop that sells papusas – a stuffed flatbread similar to a tortilla). Davis and Karon transformed the space, knocking down walls and turning it into a vibrant hub for art and community. Fray-Smith notes. ‘The first two years were spent experimenting, hosting small exhibitions and residencies, and figuring out what the museum could be.’

A pivotal moment came when the museum partnered with the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Los Angeles. This partnership allowed Davis to curate exhibitions using MOCA’s collection. He planned 18 exhibitions in total, the first being *Journey to the Moon*, a solo exhibition of South African artist William Kentridge. This exhibition, shown shortly before Davis’s death, is featured in our retrospective alongside Davis’s own works.

Central to Davis’s vision for the Underground Museum was the belief that art is for everyone. ‘He and Karon would personally knock on doors in their neighbourhood, inviting people to openings,’ Fray-Smith recalls. ‘It was a deeply personal mission to make people feel welcome in a space where they could encounter culture, other people, and ultimately, themselves.’

The museum's ethos is reflected in our approach to this exhibition. Fray-Smith explains, 'We're showcasing works that highlight the spirit of the Underground Museum, such as Davis's series of sculptures from the exhibition Imitation of Wealth. These sculptures replicate famous works by artists like Jeff Koons and Marcel Duchamp, using everyday materials, showing that art can be made by anyone.'

Though his life was tragically short, Davis's impact on the art world endures. His devotion to figurative painting and his commitment to creating spaces for art to flourish have left a profound legacy. 'Davis was an artist who worked with love, care, and resistance,' says Fray-Smith. 'He created an archive of existence, reconnecting us with the emotional textures of being human in all its rich complexity.'

The exhibition culminates with a new film commission that brings Davis's voice into the gallery. Using excerpts from his lectures and interviews, the film provides an intimate look at his reflections on art and life. 'We wanted visitors to leave the exhibition with Noah's words,' says Fray-Smith, 'to hear him speak for himself.'

For Fray-Smith, Davis's work is also a personal source of inspiration. 'When I stand in front of his paintings, I have a range of responses as I witness the beauty of his subjects, complexity of his compositions, and his facility with paint. His work makes me think about what it means to be alive, to be connected to others, and to find joy in the everyday.'

This exhibition offers a rare opportunity to engage with the work of an artist whose vision transcends boundaries. From his quietly revolutionary paintings to his community-focused projects, Davis's work invites us all to reflect on what it means to create, to connect, and to leave a lasting legacy in devotion to others.

Noah Davis

6 Feb – 11 May Art Gallery

This exhibition is generously supported by Clore Wyndham, part of the Noah Davis Exhibition Circle.



Noah Davis, Pueblo del Rio: Arabesque (detail), 2014 © The Estate of Noah Davis. Courtesy The Estate of Noah Davis and David Zwirner

Go deeper into Davis's vision

Explore the themes raised in our Noah Davis exhibition through a programme of talks, activities and film screenings running throughout the spring.

On 26 February, a panel talk, *When Artists Curate: Noah Davis and the Artist-Curator* will explore: "What does it mean for an artist to curate?" It takes Davis's work as a painter, sculptor, curator and community builder to consider the role of the artist as curator today. Placing leading curators, artists and artist-curators in dialogue with his legacy, the panel will think through what it means to intervene in a museum collection, and how humour and citation might serve as tools for institutional critique to address the complexities of representation, identity and the political.

Then, on 6 March, join curatorial assistant Kitty Gurnos-Davies on a tour of the exhibition that highlights how Davis explored the emotional textures of everyday life through his artmaking. On 20 March, curator Wells Fray-Smith will lead a tour of the exhibition, selecting some of her favourite works and discussing how Davis referenced and defied his art historical heroes, while on 27 March, American poet, writer and activist Claudia Rankine reflects upon her practice in response to Noah Davis's work as an artist, curator and community builder.

And cinema curator Matthew Barrington has curated a film series that reflects the artist's ethos. The programme blends cinematic vision and artistic response, exploring themes central to Davis's life and work, while celebrating his love for accessible and engaging art.

'Noah Davis was more than just a remarkable artist,' Barrington explains. 'He was deeply interested in creating experiences for others – sharing, connecting, and opening spaces for discovery. When we delved into the archives of the Underground Museum, which he co-founded, we found a film programme he curated, filled with engaging and popular titles.'

Central to this cinematic offering are films that Davis championed or which influenced his practice. Among them is *Purple Rain* (1984), a bold and vibrant choice. 'It's fun, it's iconic and it connects to Davis's playful side,' Barrington shares. 'Davis even named a garden at the Underground Museum in homage to Prince.' Alongside it is *Imitation of Life*, Douglas Sirk's 1959 melodrama based on Fannie Hurst's 1933 novel about two single mothers, one Black, one white, striving together in a man's world. 'He created an exhibition called *Imitation of Wealth* inspired by this film, so it felt essential to include it in the programme,' Barrington explains.

The series also reflects on Davis's legacy, featuring a short film programme named after Davis's 2007 painting *Delusions of Grandeur*.

The selected films span genres and styles, from experimental shorts and music videos to canonical works and lesser-known gems. 'The focus is on movement, bodies and music,' Barrington notes. 'Davis's paintings have this narrative, magical realism quality – embedded in the everyday yet transcendent. We wanted the films to have a similar sense of joy and discovery.'

In Davis's spirit, the cinema series emphasises engagement and celebration. 'These films connect to his world in ways that are vibrant and human,' Barrington says. 'They honour his vision while creating a space for reflection and joy.'

The public programme is supported by the US Embassy in London.



Noah Davis at work, Los Angeles, 2009

Take Noah Davis' inspiration home with you

If our groundbreaking exhibition of Noah Davis's work has delighted you, take home some of these exclusive items.

Noah Davis t-shirt & sweatshirt

These eye-catching items feature Davis's 2007 work *40 Acres* and a Unicorn featuring a figure riding a mythical unicorn, and referencing an unfulfilled Civil War promise of land and a mule to families freed from slavery.



Afroani x Barbican collaboration

We've teamed up with London-based Afroani to create these combs in two exclusive colourways, inspired by Noah Davis's paintings. Afroani was created in 2020 by Anita Lusardi, a full time mother and natural hair content creator.



Noah Davis glass dome paperweight

This eye-catching paperweight features Davis's work 1975 (3).



Noah Davis tote bag

This beautiful tote bag, printed both sides, features Davis's 2013 work 1975 (8).

Art & design

Eternal Land

Artist Citra Sasmita gives us a behind-the-scenes look at her incredible exhibition in The Curve.

Into Eternal Land by Balinese artist Citra Sasmita is an ambitious, interdisciplinary exhibition that transforms The Curve into an immersive exploration of ancestral memory, ritual practices, and feminist resistance. Working fluidly across painting, sculptural installation, embroidery, sound, and scent, Sasmita invites visitors on a symbolic journey through the 90-metre-long gallery.

'The unique curved shape [of the gallery] made me feel familiar with the sacred symbols that I inherited from Balinese culture,' Sasmita explains. Her connection to the space inspired a site-specific response, drawing on the cyclical philosophies of

reincarnation and spiritual fulfilment deeply embedded in Balinese traditions. 'I envisioned a cyclical repetition: the concept of journey and reincarnation integrates well with the flow and shape of The Curve.'

Sasmita's practice challenges hierarchies of power, colonial legacies, and patriarchal structures. Into Eternal Land reinvents traditional Balinese iconographies and craft traditions, particularly the Kamasan painting technique, historically practiced by men to depict Hindu epics. Reclaiming and subverting this practice, Sasmita positions women as central, autonomous figures in post-patriarchal worlds. 'Art has significantly changed my life as a woman raised under the pressures of patriarchal culture in Bali,' she says. 'I want to expand my knowledge and express ideas that prioritise women in central roles, as part of my effort to strengthen the existence of women not only in visual production but also in the production of ideas.'

The exhibition also grapples with Bali's colonial history, especially the lingering impact of Dutch cultural and material extraction. 'The objects, ritual tools, and important manuscripts taken from Indonesia by the Dutch colonisers are the foundation of my research,' Sasmita notes. Her work embraces gaps in historical knowledge, exploring 'limitless possibilities' in reinterpreting her cultural heritage and reclaiming erased narratives.

Nature and spirituality are integral to Into Eternal Land, grounded in the Balinese philosophy of Tri Hita Karana, which emphasises harmony between humans, the divine, and nature. 'Rituals are one form of reconciliation with nature so that it does not become angry due to the mistakes made by humans,' Sasmita explains. This connection manifests in syncretic imagery that intertwines cosmological figures with earthly forms, evoking reverence for the natural world while confronting its fragility and precarity.

Collaboration with local artists has become central to Sasmita's practice. For this commission she has worked with women embroiderers from West Bali, extending her exploration of the island's cultural and geopolitical history. Composer Agha Pradiya Yogaswara provides an evocative soundscape, blending electronic music with ritualistic tones to transform The Curve into a meditative space of spiritual pilgrimage.

'We collaborate with the desire to bring The Curve space to life as a journey toward spiritual enlightenment through contemporary art,' she says.

Citra Sasmita: Into Eternal Land

Until 21 April The Curve

This exhibition was made possible thanks to lead support from the Bagri Foundation, additional support from the MENAEA Collection, Kuala Lumpur, the Henry Moore Foundation, and Natasha Sidharta, as well as a residency in partnership with Delfina Foundation.

Into Eternal Land

Explore reimagined tales of ritual and ancestral memory in our free exhibition, alongside an artist talk and workshops.

Citra Sasmita: Into Eternal Land

Via painting, installation, embroidery and scent, take a sensory journey exploring ancestral memory, ritual and migration in Citra Sasmita's first solo UK exhibition.

30 Jan – 21 Apr The Curve

Artist Talk: Citra Sasmita

Join us to hear from artist Citra Samita and curator Lotte Johnson about the thinking and inspiration behind Into Eternal Land.

4 Feb 7pm, The Curve

Somatic Cosmologies

An in-conversation event with poets and writers on how mapping the body can help to understand and even change the world.

9 Feb 12pm, Frobisher Auditorium 1

Barbican Young Poets: In Response to Citra Sasmita

Join Barbican Young Poets for an evening of performances and readings inspired by Citra Sasmita's exhibition, Into Eternal Land.

9 Apr 7pm, The Curve

The global impact of Black British music

Renowned author Lloyd Bradley and curator Scott Leonard share the impact of Black British music on the world ahead of a new exhibition.

For more than a century, British Black music has had an outsized impact on the world stage. This spring, the Barbican Music Library will host Black Sound, a groundbreaking exhibition that demonstrates its global impact. Spanning jazz, lovers' rock, jungle, grime, and drill, it celebrates the DIY spirit that has powered British Black music from the margins to the global stage.

'This is our story,' says writer and broadcaster Lloyd Bradley, co-curator of the exhibition and author of Sounds Like London. 'It's about the people who didn't wait for permission to make history. Black British music has always been about creating for ourselves – our own platforms, our own spaces, our own audiences. That's the spirit we're celebrating with this exhibition.'

Black musicians in Britain thrived not because of mainstream support but often despite its absence. 'The industry didn't understand us, and a lot of the time, they didn't care to,' Bradley explains. 'Take grime: it had been going for years, but it took

Dizzee Rascal's Mercury Prize win to make the mainstream notice, but it had been flourishing in its own world. And lovers' rock? That wasn't what the industry thought reggae should be, but it became our Motown – a Black pop music for boys and girls growing up in Britain.'

Visitors will see vintage mixtapes, iconic magazine covers, and fly-posted walls, all celebrating the moments and movements that changed the sound of Britain. More than just a retrospective, Black Sound actively invites the public to contribute to the story. Scott Leonard describes the exhibition as 'Antiques Roadshow in reverse. We want people to bring their objects, and share their stories.'

Badley adds: 'This is about our collective history, and we want to preserve it for future generations. The young people growing up today need to know where this music came from, how it was built, and why it matters.'

'If we don't tell these stories, who will? History belongs to those who write it down. Black British music has shaped global culture, but too often, our contributions get overlooked. This exhibition is about reclaiming that narrative and making it clear: this happened, it mattered, and it's ours.'

Black Sound – The Story of British Black Music

Barbican Library

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.

Cinema

Groundbreaking films from Iran

Discover the work of a generation of 1960s Iranian filmmakers who turned their backs on the mainstream to reflect the huge transformations in society.

Fuelled by a small group of young, mostly self-taught filmmakers, the Iranian New Wave (1962–77) achieved a remarkable coherence unparalleled in Middle Eastern cinema. Now, there's a rare opportunity to see some of these groundbreaking films as we show newly restored classics, some of which have remained virtually unseen for decades.

'Iranian cinema was fully interrupted by the Second World War,' explains London-based Iranian filmmaker, writer, and film curator Ehsan Khoshbakht, who has programmed the series. After the war, the industry re-emerged with films inspired by both Western and Eastern popular genres, giving rise to the mainstream filmfarsi movement, a commercial cinema loved by audiences but dismissed by critics. By the early 1960s, however, this approach was challenged by a new generation of filmmakers. Known as cinema-ye motafavet (the Iranian New Wave), these directors rejected the glossy escapism of filmfarsi in favour of art that reflected the profound societal transformations taking place.

'Like most cinematic new waves, the Iranian New Wave was a reaction against the mainstream,' Khoshbakht says. 'The young directors of the New Wave saw filmfarsi as insufficient and irrelevant for addressing the growing problems of a nation that, despite its rich past, was hastily adapting to new ways of life.' These transformations were tied to the Shah's project of modernisation, a vision implemented without fully reckoning with

its consequences. Against this backdrop, Iranian New Wave filmmakers explored themes of alienation, anxiety, and repression, often through strikingly experimental styles.

Khoshbakht says the films in this movement have universal resonance. 'Sometimes delightfully self-reflective, these films are haunting in their portrayal of life caught in the liminal space between the old and the new. They offer a profound window into a society grappling with rapid changes, making them deeply resonant for audiences interested in the universal human experience of transformation and dislocation.'

The films Khoshbakht has chosen are extremely rare restorations. 'These are films that even Iranian audiences haven't seen in their complete form,' he notes. For instance, *Brick and Mirror* now includes 10 additional minutes previously lost, and *Chess of the Wind* was censored. Restoration has also extended to the visuals: faded, reddish tones in colour films have been replaced with vibrant, faithful hues, allowing contemporary viewers to experience these works as their creators intended.

Khoshbakht also highlights the collaborative spirit of the movement. 'This programme underscores key exchanges between filmmakers, such as the collaboration between Ebrahim Golestan and Feroz Farrokhzad, or between Amir Naderi and Abbas Kiarostami.' These partnerships underscore the shared vision and ingenuity that drove the Iranian New Wave, and the selection reflects its breathtaking diversity.

'These films are not only exemplary works of the movement but also some of the least-seen,' Khoshbakht says. 'Their enduring legacy lies not only in their cinematic innovation but also in their profound ability to examine the complexities of Iranian society.'

Masterpieces of the Iranian New Wave

4–25 Feb Cinema 1

Cinema

Spring

Brick and Mirror 15* + intro

8 & 15 Feb 3pm, Cinema 1 [CAP]

Family Film Club: Labyrinth U

8 Feb 11am, Cinema 2

The Stranger and the Fog 15 + intro

9 & 16 Feb 2.30pm, Cinema 1 [CAP]

Pather Panchali U

10 Feb 6.10pm, Cinema 3 [CAP]

Far From Home + intro

12 Feb 6.30pm, Cinema 1 [AD] [CAP]

Family Film Club: Up U

15 Feb 11am, Cinema 2

**Kevin Jerome Everson and Morgan Quaintance
In Conversation**

16 Feb 7.30pm, Frobisher Auditorium 1

Experiments in Film: Park Lanes PG

16 Feb 10.45am, Cinema 3

Relaxed Screening: Paddington in Peru PG

17 Feb 6.30pm, Cinema 3 [AD] [REL]

Senior Community Screening: No Other Land 15

17 Feb 11am, Cinema 2 [CAP]

Macbeth: David Tennant & Cush Jumbo TBC

5 Feb 8.30pm, Cinema 2; **18 Feb** 8.30pm, Cinema 1

National Theatre Live: The Importance of Being Earnest TBC

20 Feb 7pm, Cinema 2

Family Film Club: My Neighbour Totoro U

22 Feb 11am, Cinema 2

The Lock-In 18*

22 Feb 6.45pm, Cinema 1

Chess of the Wind + The Crown Jewels of Iran 15 + intro

24 Feb 6.10pm, Cinema 1 [CAP]

The Sealed Soil + The House is Black 15 + intro

25 Feb 6.20pm, Cinema 1 [CAP]

Animation at War: In This Corner of the World 12A

27 Feb 6.10pm, Cinema 3

Relaxed Screening: Anora 18

28 Feb 12pm, Cinema 3 [AD] [REL]

RBO Live: Swan Lake 12A

2 Mar 2pm, Cinema 3

Senior Community Screening: Crossing 15

3 Mar 11am, Cinema 2 [AD]

Purple Rain 15

12 Mar 6.15pm, Cinema 1

MET Opera: Fidelio 12A

15 Mar 5pm, Cinema 1

Senior Community Screening: Dahomey PG

17 Mar 11am, Cinema 2

Imitation of Life (1959) 12

22 Mar 3.20pm, Cinema 1

RBO Live: Romeo & Juliet 12A**23 Mar** 2pm, Cinema 3**National Theatre Live: Dr Strangelove** TBC**27 Mar** 7pm, Cinema 1**Senior Community Screening: Emilia Pérez** 15**31 Mar** 11am, Cinema 2 **[AD]****Delusions of Grandeur** 15***3 Apr** 6.30pm, Cinema 3**RBO Live: Turandot** 12A**6 Apr** 2pm, Cinema 3**MET Opera: Le Nozze di Figaro** 12A**3 May** 6pm, Cinema 1**Regular Screenings**

Learn more about all of our regular screenings by visiting 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

New releases every Saturday and Monday morning. Sign up to the mailing list at barbican.org.uk/parentandbaby

Relaxed Screenings

One Friday and one Monday per month, we show a film in a tailored environment for people who prefer a more relaxed environment, with lower sound and space to move about.

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

Don't miss these exciting new releases

Cinema Curator Delphine Lievens guides us through some of the key big screen releases this season.

February opens with awards season and two exciting foreign language films. Released on 7 February, *The Seed of the Sacred Fig* from Iranian director Mohammad Rasoulof is scooping up awards wins and nominations across the board, including the Special Jury Prize in Cannes where it premiered last year. In this politically driven thriller set during Iran's 2022 rebellion, investigating judge Iman's gun vanishes, and he chooses to place the blame on his wife and two daughters. With political turmoil swirling around them, he places increasingly draconian measures on his family, culminating in him locking them inside the house as their family ties are strained to breaking point.

The backdrop of political unrest also plays a key role in new release *I'm Still Here*. From *The Motorcycle Diaries* director Walter Salles, and featuring a Golden Globes award-winning turn from Brazilian actress Fernanda Torres, the film comes to our cinema screens from 21 February. Based on the memoir of the same name, Torres plays Eunice, a mother and activist who has to hold her family together after the forced disappearance of her husband during Brazil's 1970 military dictatorship.

Another foreign language gem to look out for is Palestinian film *To a Land Unknown*, which played to packed screens here as part of last year's London Palestine Film Festival. Released on 14 February, the film follows refugees Chatila and Reda, who are saving money for fake passports to help them get out of Athens where they currently live. When Reda spends their savings on his drug addiction, Chatila hatches a dangerous plan to help them escape from their hopeless situation.

On 7 March we will be treated to *Mickey 17*, the eagerly-awaited next film from *Parasite* director Bong Joon-ho. With an all-star cast featuring the likes of Robert Pattinson (in the title role of Mickey), Toni Collette, Mark Ruffalo, and Steven Yeun to name but a few, this sci-fi comedy promises to be a fun and thrilling journey. Mickey is an 'expendable', a disposable human sent on a mission to colonise the ice world Niflheim. After one iteration of Mickey is killed in action, a new body is regenerated with most of his memories intact. After he's died multiple times, Mickey begins to understand the terms of his job, and why no one else was willing to take it...

March also brings another Golden Globe winning film to our screens, the Best Animated Picture winning *Flow*. With a beautiful, painterly animation style and no dialogue, the film tells the story of Cat, a solitary animal. When Cat's home is devastated by a great

flood, he has to join forces with a motley crew of other animals in order to survive, including the likes of a capybara, a golden retriever and a secretary bird.

There are more animated treats in store in April, with the Studio Ghibli favourite *Howl's Moving Castle* returning to the big screen. Releasing on 11 April, and available in the original Japanese language and dubbed English language versions, the adventures of young wizard Howl and his witch companion Sophie are ideal for audiences both young and old to enjoy together at Easter time.



Mickey 17 (2025) dir. Bong Joon-ho

All information correct at the time of press. For the most up to date information, see barbican.org.uk

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Aged 14–25?

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Classical music

Why I changed my perspective on Paul Robeson

How do you find the humanity in an icon? Davóne Tines says his relationship with Paul Robeson was transformed by his latest project.

Baritone Davóne Tines has created an innovative and deeply personal concert that pays tribute to Paul Robeson, the legendary singer, actor, and activist. However, he says because he's been compared with Robeson in the past, he found this project challenging to begin with. 'At first, I found being compared to Robeson felt reductive – just another Black opera singer comparison,' Tines explains. 'But as I learned more about him, I found myself inspired by his commitment to humanity, his Renaissance-man spirit, and his vulnerability.'

The preparation for Robeson involved extensive research and introspection. 'I spent years listening to his recordings – not to mimic him, but to understand how his voice worked,' Tines shares. 'Robeson's singing had this perfect balance of resonance and grounded core, which became a kind of finishing school for my own vocal technique. It was transformative for me, not just as a singer but as a person.'

The recital starts from Robeson's 1961 suicide attempt in Moscow, after enduring years of persecution at the hands of the American government, who hated his communist sympathies. 'That event made Robeson human to me,' says Tines. 'It showed that even someone as seemingly invincible as him could face profound struggles. But he survived, and that resilience is something we can all relate to. Everyone has faced moments where the weight of the world felt unbearable, but we found a way through.'

This focus on vulnerability is central to the performance. 'Robeson wasn't just a monolithic figure – he was a person. By humanising him, we honour his legacy in a way that feels real and accessible,' Tines adds.

Robeson blends music, narrative, and innovative recital structure. 'It's not a traditional recital with discrete pieces,' he explains. 'Instead, songs flow into one another, creating a continuous emotional journey. It's about building an atmosphere that allows the audience to connect deeply with the material.'

While the concert is steeped in Robeson's legacy, it is also a dialogue between past and present. 'I'm not impersonating him,' Tines clarifies. 'It's about finding where our voices and stories resonate, about connecting his life to the challenges and aspirations we face today.'

The London setting adds another layer of meaning. Robeson spent significant parts of his career in the city, making this performance an opportunity to connect his story to a place he once called home. 'It's exciting to bring Robeson to London, where he lived and worked,' says Tines. 'It makes his story feel tangible, reminding us that he wasn't just a colossal figure – he was someone who lived among us.'

At its heart, Robeson is about fostering connection and empathy. 'This performance is not just about celebrating Robeson – it's about humanising each other,' says Tines. 'We often dehumanise one another, treating people as functions rather than as individuals. This concert invites us to see and hear one another in a deeper way.'

**ROBESON with Davóne Tines and The Truth:
A Classical Americana Electro-Gospel Acid Trip
15 Feb 7.30pm, Milton Court**

Celebrating Shostakovich

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the death of composer Dmitri Shostakovich, and we have a broad range of opportunities to hear his incredible work performed by some of the greatest musicians in the world.

Gianandrea Noseda will lead the London Symphony Orchestra in two concerts featuring his work. The conductor has long been captivated by Shostakovich's music, describing his relationship with the composer as both challenging and deeply rewarding. Noseda recalls a revelatory performance of the Fourth Symphony at the Mariinsky Theatre. 'It was transformative,' he says. This passion has fuelled his extensive repertoire of Shostakovich's works. 'I've always been drawn to his craftsmanship. His sense of structure and orchestration is incredible – secure and firm, yet bursting with imagination.'

The first concert, on 3 April, opens with Shostakovich's lively and celebratory Festive Overture. Noseda describes it as 'a brilliant and flamboyant piece that is short but immensely effective. It connects with the audience immediately with its sense of excitement.' While lighter than many of Shostakovich's other works, the overture reflects the composer's meticulous craftsmanship. 'It's like Beethoven's smaller works – effortless yet impeccable, demonstrating his mastery of form and wit,' Noseda explains.

The centrepiece of the evening is Symphony No. 12, The Year 1917. Dedicated to Lenin, the work chronicles the October Revolution, a subject that complicates its reception. Noseda acknowledges this challenge, noting, 'The symphony has a strong political theme, and it's difficult to separate that from the music. But if you listen without preconceptions, you'll hear a composer at the peak of his powers.'

The LSO's second evening, on 13 April, returns to the theme of the Russian Revolution, with Symphony No. 2, To October. It is among Shostakovich's boldest and most experimental works. Nosedá regards it as 'his most modern symphony, both adventurous and daring.'

Unlike Symphony No. 12, which unfolds over four movements, Symphony No. 2 is composed as a single, continuous work with four distinct sections. The symphony culminates in a choral finale that celebrates the revolution's ideals. Nosedá describes the work as 'a fascinating blend of modernity and narrative.' He points to its clusters and strict counterpoint, comparing its dense textures to Ligeti's Requiem. 'It's remarkable how Shostakovich creates such intensity and unease, yet never loses his sense of direction. The craftsmanship is astounding.'

Also sharing the works of one of the 20th century's greatest composers is the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, led by Semyon Bychkov. The orchestra will perform Symphony No. 5 'Shostakovich had this unique ability to express fear, hope, joy, and despair all in the same breath,' Bychkov says. He says the composer's music is intertwined with his experiences in Soviet Russia: 'It's impossible to separate Shostakovich from his time. His music carries the weight of history, and it's a testament to his courage as an artist.' The concert also features Sheku Kanneh-Mason playing Shostakovich's Cello Concerto No. 1 – a piece with which Kanneh-Mason secured the title of BBC Young Musician of the Year in 2016.

Nosedá likens Shostakovich's approach to that of Beethoven. 'The sense of form is always present. The compositions are engineered so brilliantly that they stand alone, even as they explore vast emotional landscapes,' he explains. His admiration extends to the innovative ways Shostakovich expanded orchestral colours.

'He was not an experimental composer in the vein of Schoenberg, but his orchestration is so sensitive and imaginative that it feels groundbreaking.'

Bychkov echoes this sentiment, adding, 'Shostakovich was a master at capturing the paradoxes of life. His music can be celebratory and anguished, often at the same time. That's what makes it so deeply human.'

For Bychkov, this duality is key to understanding Shostakovich's genius. 'His music speaks to every aspect of the human condition. It challenges you to feel deeply, to confront truths about ourselves and our world,' he says.

We also dive into Shostakovich's string quartets, as the Carducci Quartet perform all fifteen of them over a series of five concerts. And the Australian Chamber Orchestra returns to mark its own 50th anniversary with a programme that includes Shostakovich's Piano Concerto in C minor and his Chamber Symphony.



Gianandrea Noseda and the LSO © Mark Allan

Classical music

Spring

London Symphony Orchestra / Daniel Harding:

Mahler Symphony No 7

2 Feb 7pm, Hall

LSO Half Six Fix: Walton Symphony No 1

5 Feb 6.30pm, Hall

LSO / Sir Antonio Pappano: Walton Symphony No 1

6 Feb 7pm, Hall

BBC Symphony Orchestra:

Jacquot conducts Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto

7 Feb 7.30pm, Hall

Academy of Ancient Music: Italian Legacies – Geminiani and his English Contemporaries

7 Feb 7.30pm, Milton Court

LSO / Sir Antonio Pappano: A Sea Symphony

9 Feb 7pm, Hall

India's Music of Today: Niladri Kumar

11 Feb 6.30pm, Hall

LSO Half Six Fix: Vaughan Williams

12 Feb 6.30pm, Hall

BBC SO: Hindoyan conducts Barber's Violin Concerto

13 Feb 7.30pm, Hall

BBC Singers / Sofi Jeannin: James Macmillan's Ordo Virtutum

13 Feb 7.30pm, Milton Court

Music of the Movies: From the Heart**14 Feb** 7.30pm, Hall**ROBESON with Davóne Tines and The Truth:
A Classical Americana Electro-Gospel Acid Trip****15 Feb** 7.30pm, Milton Court**Madrid Philharmonic Orchestra:
Ennio Morricone and 100 Years of Cinema****16 Feb** 4pm, Hall**Madrid Philharmonic Orchestra: Sketches of Spain****16 Feb** 7.30pm, Hall**Commemorating Shostakovich: Kissin and friends****17 Feb** 7.30pm, Hall**Women of the Windrush****20 Feb** 7pm, Milton Court**BBC SO Total Immersion: Symphonic Electronics****Meet Steven Daverson****23 Feb** 11am, Fountain Room**Iridescence****23 Feb** 1pm, Milton Court**Continents, Computers and Electronic Dreams****23 Feb** 3pm, Hall**Meet Shiva Feshareki****23 Feb** 5pm, Fountain Room**Shiva Feshareki and Stockhausen****23 Feb** 7.30pm, Hall

Martha Argerich with the Oxford Philharmonic**24 Feb** 7.30pm, Hall**Guildhall School: Mansfield Park****24 Feb – 3 Mar** Silk Street Theatre**Louis Lortie: Chopin Études****27 Feb** 7.30pm, Hall**Shostakovich Quartets: Intimate Portraits, Part 2****28 Feb** 7.30pm, Milton Court**BBC SO: Chan conducts Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony****28 Feb** 7.30pm, Hall**Reformations: Cantata with the Dunedin Consort****6 Mar** 7.30pm, Milton Court**Guildhall Symphony Orchestra / Roberto González-Monjas:
An Alpine Symphony****6 Mar** 7.30pm, Hall**Czech Philharmonic / Bychkov: Shostakovich 5****7 Mar** 7.30pm, Hall**Czech Philharmonic / Bychkov: Mahler 5****8 Mar** 7.30pm, Hall**LSO: Family Concert****9 Mar** 2.30pm, Hall**BBC SO: Stasevska conducts Ravel****12 Mar** 7.30pm, Hall**LSO / Barbara Hannigan: Roussel, Ravel, Britten & Haydn****13 Mar** 7pm, Hall

Academy of Ancient Music Transatlantic: Classical Masters**13 Mar** 7.30pm, Milton Court**Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, LSO & Sir Antonio Pappano****15 Mar** 7pm, Hall**Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis****16 Mar** 7.30pm, Hall**Ibn Battuta: The Traveller of Time with Jordi Savall****17 Mar** 7.30pm, Hall**LSO Half Six Fix: Bartók****19 Mar** 6.30pm, Hall**LSO / Barbara Hannigan: The Miraculous Mandarin – Suite****20 Mar** 7pm, Hall**Guildhall School: Spring Opera Scenes****20–25 Mar** Milton Court Studio Theatre**Australian Chamber Orchestra: Bach, Shostakovich & Gubaidalina****21 Mar** 7.30pm, Hall**Junior Guildhall Brass Band & Wind Orchestra / Spencer Down****22 Mar** 5.30pm, Milton Court**LSO / Sir Antonio Pappano: Beethoven Symphony No 9****23 Mar** 7pm, Hall**The Silence of the Lambs – In Concert****24 Mar** 7.30pm, Hall**Berliner Barock Solisten / Kapelis – Bach:
Complete Keyboard Concertos****25 Mar** 7.30pm, Hall

Britten Sinfonia: 1945 – A Kind of Haunting**25 Mar** 7.30pm, Milton Court**Shostakovich Quartets: Intimate Portraits, Part 3****27 Mar** 7.30pm, Milton Court**Junior Guildhall Symphony Orchestra / Julian Clayton****29 Mar** 6pm, Milton Court**BBC SO Total Immersion: Pierre Boulez****Boulez at the BBC (Film)****30 Mar** 11am, Cinema 1**The Man and the Music (Talk)****30 Mar** 1.30pm, Fountain Room**The Chamber Music (Concert)****30 Mar** 3pm, Milton Court**The Legacy (Talk)****30 Mar** 5pm, Fountain Room**Pli selon pli (Concert)****30 Mar** 7pm, Hall**Khatia and Gvantsa Buniatishvili****2 Apr** 7.30pm, Hall**LSO / Gianandrea Noseda: Shostakovich Symphony No 12****3 Apr** 7pm, Hall**Moving Eastman****3 & 4 Apr** 7.30pm, The Pit**BBC SO: Wigglesworth conducts Debussy and Berg****4 Apr** 7.30pm, Hall

Guru Nanak's Message of Peace Through Music

Exploring Guru Nanak's Philosophy of Oneness

by Prof Arvind-Pal S Mandair

6 Apr 9.45am, Frobisher Rooms

Film: Mardana's Children: The Rababis of Lahore

6 Apr 11am, Frobisher Auditorium 1

Immersive Experiential Mool Mantra Workshop

by Davinder Panesar

6 Apr 12pm, Frobisher Rooms

Guru Nanak's Message of Peace and Forgiveness

6 Apr 1pm, Frobisher Auditorium 1

Guru Nanak and Indian Classical Music

6 Apr 2.30pm, Frobisher Rooms

Guru Nanak's Message of Peace through Music

6 Apr 5pm, Hall

LSO Half Six Fix: Prokofiev 2

9 Apr 6.30pm, Hall

LSO / Gianandrea Noseda: Prokofiev Symphony No 2

10 Apr 7pm, Hall

BBC SO: Oramo conducts Vaughan Williams

11 Apr 7.30pm, Hall

Chamber Orchestra of Europe and Sunwook Kim

12 Apr 7.30pm, Hall

LSO / Gianandrea Noseda: Song of Destiny

13 Apr 7pm, Hall

Britten's Canticles**16 Apr** 7.30pm, Milton Court**BBC SO: Oramo conducts Mahler's Fourth Symphony****16 Apr** 7.30pm, Hall**Lang Lang in Recital: Fauré, Schumann & Chopin****17 Apr** 7.30pm, Hall**Academy of Ancient Music: Bach's St John Passion****18 Apr** 3pm, Hall**BBC SO: Hough plays Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto****25 Apr** 7.30pm, Hall**National Open Youth Orchestra: Ring Out! No More Barriers****27 Apr** 3–4pm, Milton Court [REL]**Shostakovich Quartets: Intimate Portraits, Part 4****29 Apr** 7.30pm, Milton Court**Seong-Jin Cho: A Ravel-athon****2 May** 7.30pm, Hall**Mahan Esfahani Harpsichord Recital****3 May** 7.30pm, Milton Court**LSO / Sir Simon Rattle: The Excursions of Mr Brouček****4 & 6 May** 7pm, Hall**Holst, Gershwin and Martin****with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra****5 May** 7.30pm, Hall**Handel: Jephtha with Il Pomo d'Oro and Joyce DiDonato****7 May** 7.30pm, Hall

Her Ensemble: The Three Dancers

7 May 8pm, Milton Court

The Gold Medal

8 May 7pm, Hall

Handel's Giulio Cesare with The English Concert

11 May 6pm, Hall

BBC Singers / Owain Park: Songs from the Shows

11 May 7.30pm, Milton Court

All information correct at the time of press. For the most up to date information, see barbican.org.uk

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Lang Lang © Olaf Heine

Contemporary music

One of a kind

Don't miss a series of concerts bringing a series of exciting London premieres to our Hall.

Among the artists performing will be Spiritualized, playing their seminal album *Pure Phase* in its entirety, alt-rock icon Kim Deal shares her new solo album *Nobody Loves You More*, and Fatoumata Diawara brings her *London Ko* album to life. We asked the Malian superstar about her practice and love of collaboration.

What is it that you find artistically fulfilling about collaborating with other artists?

I love collaborating, because the music that I'm doing is really special – the fact that I sing in Bambara language, and also use my vocal technique, it's something different, it's typical from my country, Mali. And I know that the people I invite on my work, do different things. And the combination can be amazing. It's like sharing the music, sharing love. Taking the risk to take your type of music to other people and sharing your music with them, from Damon Albarn to Angie Stone to Nneka from Nigeria, M.anifest from Ghana, it's like experimenting with a new style of music. It's love.

When you're confident, when you trust what you're doing, you don't fear that people might change your music. Because you know that your personality and the type of music that you're doing is already strong. So you don't need to be afraid of inviting people on top of that type of music. That's what Damon is doing and is teaching us to do the same thing. When you look at the Gorillaz project, it's all about inviting people to take part and it's always amazing.

You embrace international styles, while also maintaining your authentic Malian roots. What appeals to you about that?

The perspective of having an open mind to the rest of the world is like a responsibility. I feel like in my generation it's my duty to do that. Everybody cannot be the same. But in every single generation, you will have someone that can represent that open spirit, like a Salif Keita, Oumou Sangaré, Amadou and Mariam, it's representation.

I think I represent that the new generation in Mali allow people to be in touch with our culture. You can do what you can do, but the first thing is to really have that spirit, no fear – trust your culture, your traditions, your music, trust what you're doing. Many people invite me naturally, Herbie Hancock, Didi Bridgewater, since my beginning, they were attracted to my energy. I have been accepted since at the beginning. So I've been learning a lot from them, and I realised that that was possible. You can decide which kind of energy you want to put into music, and it works when you trust that energy. It's something spiritual too. It's all about spirituality, about energy, about feelings, things that you cannot really explain and are difficult to express. But it's about energy, and I trust that energy – it's a kind of divinity, and I really preserve that. I love it, and I let it go. I take the advantage of it, and I embrace that energy and feel no fear about going to other people and sharing music with them. I really love it. It's strong, it's powerful, it feeds you. And your energy feeds the audience at the same time.

Fatoumata Diawara

17 May 7.30pm, Hall

Contemporary music

Spring

An Intimate Evening with Jason Isbell

10 Feb 8.30pm, Hall

Theo Croker's Dream Manifest

15 Feb 8pm, Hall

Barbican ClubStage: Wu-Lu, Denzel Himself & SHEIVA

21 Feb 11pm, ClubStage

Brit Floyd: Wish You Were Here

25 Feb 7.30pm, Hall

Kim Deal

1 Mar 8pm, Hall

Maria Schneider and Oslo Jazz Ensemble Present Data Lords

2 Mar 7.30pm, Hall

Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis:

The Democracy! Suite

16 Mar 7.30pm, Hall

Lizz Wright

18 Mar 8pm, Hall

Spiritualized: Pure Phase

26 & 27 Mar 7.30pm, Hall

Ichiko Aoba

31 Mar 8pm, Hall

Hania Rani & Ensemble

5 Apr 7.30pm, Hall

Eastwood Symphonic: A Son's Tribute to his Father**7 Apr** 7.30pm, Hall**Yann Tiersen****19 Apr** 7.30pm, Hall**Eliades Ochoa****22 Apr** 7.30pm, Hall**Daniel Brandt: Without Us / Tristan Perich & Ensemble 0:****Open Symmetry****24 Apr** 7.30pm, Hall**Charlie Cunningham****26 Apr** 8pm, Hall**Whiplash – In concert****3 May** 4pm & 8pm, Hall**Mustafa****9 May** 7.30pm, Hall**Tony Ann****10 May** 7.30pm, Hall**Fatoumata Diawara****17 May** 7.30pm, Hall

Fatoumata Diawara © Alun Be

Drawing parallels between music and visual art

Inspired by artist Noah Davis's approach to creativity, jazz pianist Jason Moran will explore how two art forms can inspire each other.

Renowned composer and jazz pianist Jason Moran will explore the dialogue between music and visual art during a recital and talk inspired by the late artist Noah Davis – the subject of our major exhibition in the Art Gallery.

Moran's connection to Davis stems from his admiration for the Underground Museum in Los Angeles, which Davis co-founded with his wife, Karon Davis. While Moran and Davis never met, Moran has drawn profound inspiration from Davis's ethos of making art accessible to everyone. 'My relationship with the spirit of Noah began after he passed,' Moran explained. 'I was intrigued by the Underground Museum and its ability to hold space for the community in such an organic and meaningful way.'

Davis blended historical and contemporary source material to create images of Black life unbound by a specific time or place. Moran views this as deeply resonant with music. 'In a painting, you have a moment frozen in time. Music, on the other hand, needs time – it's always in motion,' he says. 'So in that way, they are very far apart from one another, but in the other way, Noah's – and other artists' relationship to sound is worth talking about. There are things artists gather from going to see concerts that gets distilled into canvases. Both art forms can evoke questions, emotions, and a sense of place that lingers. That's where I find the connection.'

Moran will deliver a talk on 8 May and a performance the following day. During the talk, he will delve into the themes of Davis's work, drawing parallels to the processes of musicians and artists. He plans to discuss a painting of Davis's (not included in the

exhibition) showing a pianist sitting outside in front of the projects in Los Angeles. 'It's this juxtaposition of displacement and presence that fascinates me. How did the piano get there? Who moved it? And what does it signify?' Moran remarks.

In his recital, Moran will create a musical response to Davis's paintings. 'I felt a link to Thelonious Monk's Evidence in which he used the sound of a basketball game as the inspiration for his sound. That idea of using the chaos and rhythm of the world around you feels so connected to Noah's ability to distil life's complexities onto a canvas.'

For Moran, Davis's life and work represent more than just artistic excellence – they symbolise a commitment to accessibility in the arts. 'Noah was trying to create something beyond the confines of commercialism. He was restless in the best way, always pushing the boundaries of what art could mean for the community,' he says.

Jason Moran: Talk

8 May 7pm, Art Gallery

Jason Moran: Recital

9 May 7.30pm, Milton Court

All information correct at the time of press. For the most up to date information, see barbican.org.uk

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Theatre & dance

A feast of living portraits on stage

With its incisive perspective on human nature, Chekhov's *The Seagull* resonates as much today as when it premiered more than 100 years ago. We hear from cast members ahead of its limited run here this spring.

Exploring the clash between ambition and reality, the ache of unreturned love, and the vulnerability that defines us all, *The Seagull* is one of Russian playwright Anton Chekhov's most enduring plays. A new production, opening in February sees Cate Blanchett return to the Barbican stage, this time in the role of celebrated actress Arkadina. She's joined by Tom Burke (playing Arkadina's lover Trigorin), with whom she recently finished filming on Steven Soderbergh's *Black Bag*.

Set on a country estate, *The Seagull* follows a struggling playwright, an aspiring actress, and those caught in their orbit, revealing the tangled web of desires and disappointments that shape their lives.

Kodi Smit-McPhee takes the role of Arkadina's playwright son Konstantin. He says: 'I connect with Konstantin in many ways, for better or worse. I find myself to be very ambitious yet sometimes lack the confidence or faith to follow through with my potential.' He relates to Konstantin's inner battles, adding, 'My mind overflows with theories, ideas, reason, and data.'

Jason Watkins, who portrays Sorin, describes his character as someone out of place in his life. 'Sorin is a fish out of water. He wants to live in the city, be a writer – and as he sees it, live his life to the full. He feels disappointed that he hasn't done this.' Reflecting on Sorin's internal conflicts, he adds: 'Most of the

characters, if not all, are obsessed with themselves. And perhaps we in contemporary life are becoming more concerned with our own image, when we should be absolutely looking outwards.'

Priyanga Burford (Polina) says she identifies with her character's quiet sense of yearning. 'I know how it feels to long for something which you cannot have or is beyond your capabilities to achieve. I understand Polina's sense of time slipping through her fingers.'

Chekhov's plays are renowned for their use of subtext, where the unspoken often carries as much weight as the dialogue. Smit-McPhee says this is something that emerges naturally when an actor fully inhabits their role. 'One has to grow a familiarity with a character in a way which resembles the familiarity we have with ourselves.'

Burford captures the essence of subtext succinctly: 'Life is subtext, isn't it? Most of the time people are saying certain words but their body language is telling you something else.' Her observation aligns with Chekhov's intent to depict life's contradictions and complexities authentically.

When reflecting on the play's relevance, the cast members point to its universal themes and characters. Watkins says that the play's appeal lies in its exploration of human behaviour. 'Why do people do things – why don't they? What are the motivations behind what people say? Many living portraits together on stage... What could be more compelling than this?'

Smit-McPhee believes the play's themes of love, ambition, and existential uncertainty are timeless. 'It covers the reality of love, ambition, art, existential dread, and our desperate search for meaning. It highlights the reality that we cannot categorise humans we encounter as absolutes... but we are only and absolutely flawed

humans.’ He says this nuanced portrayal of humanity is one of Chekhov’s great strengths.

For Burford, the play’s enduring appeal lies in its focus on everyday life. ‘Chekhov always said that he wanted to present people’s lives as they were... People’s everyday lives are full of challenges, intrigues, secret pleasures, rivalries, and unfulfilled desires.’ She describes *The Seagull* as capturing ‘the majestic poetry of the mundane’.

For 130 years, *The Seagull* has captivated audiences with its careful and sometimes uncomfortable spotlight on human nature. Its enduring popularity is in its universality, as Smit-McPhee highlights: ‘Through Chekhov’s writing, we see that we are all so similar.’

Theatre & dance

Feb–May

KS6: Small Forward

5–8 Feb Various times, The Pit

Guildhall School of Music and Drama: Henry VIII

10–15 Feb Various times, Milton Court Theatre

Lil.Miss.Lady

12–15 Feb 7.45pm, The Pit **[BSL]**

Guildhall School of Music and Drama: Mansfield Park

24 Feb – 3 Mar 7pm, Silk Street Theatre

Guildhall School of Music and Drama: The Winter’s Tale

21–26 Mar Various times, Silk Street Theatre

The Seagull**26 Feb – 5 Apr** Various times, Theatre **[AD] [CAP]****FuelFest****Beauty is the Beast****10–12 Mar** 7.45pm, The Pit**Al, Al, Oh... (or how I wrote a hit sitcom with ChatGPT but we're not talking now)****13–15 Mar** 7.45pm, The Pit**Jay Bernard: Joint****17–19 Mar** 7.45pm, The Pit**Melanie Wilson: Oracle Song****20–22 Mar** 7.45pm, The Pit**The Black Saint and The Sinner Lady****16–19 Apr** Various times, Theatre **[BSL]****Hamlet****24–27 Apr** Various times, Theatre**Queer East Festival: When the Cloud Catches Colours****24–26 Apr** Various times, The Pit**Krapp's Last Tape****30 Apr – 3 May** Various times, Theatre **[AD]****Passion Fruit****30 Apr – 3 May** 8pm, The Pit **[BSL] [REL]****Hip Hop Matters****9 May** 7.30–9.30pm, Frobisher Auditorium 1**A Night With Boy Blue – Generation Blue****10–11 May** Various times, Theatre **[BSL]**

BB – Frontline Battle

11 May 12–4pm, Theatre



Queer East Festival: When the Cloud Catches Colours
© Drama Box (Singapore)

A place of innovation

Our performance space The Pit is a home for some of the most exciting cutting-edge and groundbreaking theatre in London. And as this latest season will show, there's a very broad range of voices to discover.

Among the exciting productions is *Passion Fruit*, a powerful and dynamic coming-of-age play by Dior Clarke and Stephanie Martin. Rooted in Clarke's lived experiences and enriched through collaboration, the play navigates themes of self-love, identity, and the complexity of family and community.

'I've always wanted to tell stories that reflect my experience,' says Clarke. 'Growing up, I never saw myself represented. *Passion Fruit* is about filling that gap, telling the story of a Black British Jamaican boy growing up in London, navigating his culture, and finding himself within the Black gay scene.'

First performed at The Glory, a pub and queer performance venue, *Passion Fruit* has evolved significantly on its journey to the Barbican. 'It started raw and intimate, but now it's grown into something bigger and more polished while staying true to its roots,' Clarke explains. But at its heart, it's a story of self-acceptance. 'Coming out isn't about being accepted by the world,' Clarke reflects. 'It's about accepting yourself. That's one of the strongest messages of this play.'

The narrative follows its protagonist as he grows up on a North London estate, grappling with the pressures of teenage masculinity, domestic violence, and homophobia. The second act explores his entry into the vibrant but complex Black gay scene, where he experiences both freedom and challenges.

'We see him stumble and grow, from struggling with his identity to finding self-love,' says Clarke. 'By the end, the message is clear: you don't need to fit into any box to feel whole.'

Martin adds: 'The play is about balancing where you come from and where you're going. It's a love letter to culture and community, but also a critique of the struggles within them.'

Clarke and Martin's partnership has been pivotal to the play's development. 'Working together is like having a protective blanket,' Clarke shares. 'It's not just my story anymore; it's something we've shaped together. That's allowed us to make it more universal, so it resonates with a wider audience.'

Despite tackling heavy themes, *Passion Fruit* brims with joy. 'We want to celebrate life as much as reveal the challenges,' says Martin. 'Yes, there's trauma – domestic violence, homophobia – but there's also fun, laughter, and the thrill of being young. It's a rollercoaster.'

Clarke adds, 'It's not just a struggle story. There's love – especially between the protagonist and his mother – and a celebration of the joy found in community, even amidst challenges.'

Bringing this play to the Barbican is a milestone for the creators. 'It's amazing to see this story in such a prestigious space,' says Clarke. 'It's a blessing to share it with more people. I don't think there's been a play like this at the Barbican before.'

Also coming up will be new work by Belarus Free Theatre, whose *KS6 Small Forward* is about and starring Belarusian basketball player and activist Katsiaryna Snytsina. HighRise Entertainment return from the success of *The UK Drill Project with Lil.Miss.Lady*, an immersive history of Grime, told through the eyes of a trailblazing female MC, while Queer East Festival's *When the Cloud Catches Colours* explores the experience of two queer Singaporeans as they grow older.

Passion Fruit

30 Apr – 3 May 8pm, The Pit [BSL] [REL]



Passion Fruit by Dior Clarke and Stephanie Martin © Guy Sanders

All information correct at the time of press. For the most up to date information, see barbican.org.uk

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Aged 14–25?

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*Subject to availability

Young creatives

Creative inspiration you can get your hands on

Discover fresh ideas and creative inspiration at the Young Barbican Takeover Festival – a day celebrating London’s young creatives featuring an exciting mix of workshops, live performances, and talks.

The Level G FreeStage will host an incredible lineup of free live music from the underground guitar scene, curated by So Young Magazine. No festival pass is needed – just drop in and enjoy some of the UK’s exciting new talent. The afternoon opens with the raw, atmospheric energy of Restless Taxis, followed by the stripped-back bass-and-drums duo Most Things; the haunting folk stylings of Pem; the raucous and unpredictable five-piece Man/Woman/Chainsaw, and the genre-defying, experimental sounds of Folly Group. Each set includes a Q&A with the band, hosted by So Young’s writers, offering insight into the artists’ creative process.

There are also multiple talks, offering inspiration and guidance for aspiring creatives. Journalist Precious Adesina and editor Charlie Brinkhurst-Cuff will share their advice on breaking into journalism, while Felicia Pennant, founder of the trailblazing SEASON zine, will explore DIY magazine publishing and creating content that challenges norms in football culture.

Award-winning writer and performer Travis Alabanza will join Susanna Davies-Crook, the Barbican's Curator of Public Programmes, for a thought-provoking conversation about Alabanza's work addressing gender, trans identity, and race. James Massiah, an acclaimed poet and sought-after DJ, will deliver a reading of his work, blending insight and energy from London's rich spoken word scene. Later in the day, actor and writer Laurie Ogden, a former winner of the Ambit Poetry Prize and Outspoken Poetry Prize, will share readings that highlight her multidisciplinary artistry.

Our Barbican Young Poets cohort will showcase their talent throughout the day. This artist development programme supports young writers as they refine their craft and experiment with new forms of creative expression. The poets will also wrap up the day with a session celebrating the spoken word.

Elsewhere, get hands-on at makers' workshops led by Artizine and Material Grrrlz, and take advantage of opportunities to meet and learn from creative industry professionals. From networking events to panel discussions, the festival provides space to connect, share ideas, and gain insights from some of the most exciting voices in the arts.

In the Cinemas, the Young Film Programmers alumni have curated an afternoon of screenings, offering an engaging selection of films for cinephiles and casual viewers alike.

Whether you're a creator, performer, or simply curious, the Young Barbican Takeover Festival invites you to explore new ideas, meet like-minded individuals, and celebrate London's vibrant creative community.

Young Barbican Takeover Festival

2 Mar All day, Across the Centre

To get the full programme, visit barbican.org.uk



© Gar Powell-Evans

What does cinema mean today?

Chronic Youth, our annual film festival curated by the Barbican Young Film Programmers marks its tenth anniversary in April. To celebrate, we asked some of this year's cohort to reflect on their relationship with cinema.

When we launched the Chronic Youth Film Festival a decade ago, going to the cinema was a whole thing. It was the first date, the birthday party, the late-night spot, the creative catalyst. Back then, you would have to go to the cinema to see films such as *Memento*, *Coyote Ugly*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* – you couldn't just stream these from your bedroom, let alone hear directly from

the talent on TikTok. However, despite the rise of streaming services, cinemas still stand strong. We asked this year's Young Programmers what cinema means to them.

Time capsules Kathryn, 27

Cinema for me is about the art of visual storytelling. It is a long and lavish history of creativity, of hard work, of the desire to reach out from a screen to an audience and invite them into a narrative. It is an art form that comes from collaboration.

Films speak to the culture they were made in, they are time capsules of a moment. For me, it is a form of inspiration. There is something special about sitting in a dark room full of strangers, watching art unfold on the big screen, all of us there to experience something communally.

Traversing worlds Angelica, 24 Throughout my life, I have always enjoyed the thrill of traversing different cinematic worlds, both imagined and real.

Over time, my relationship with going to the cinema has changed. As a child, my dad would take my sister and I to our local cinema's Kids Club screenings nearly every weekend. We would spend afternoons at the DVD rental shop, rummaging through the shelves for our next watch. In recent years, the local cinema landscape has changed, and roles have slightly reversed. I have started being the one 'dragging' my family and friends to see films that may be of interest. The other week, I asked my mum to come see *Conclave* (Edward Berger). She didn't know much about what she was going into, but we enjoyed the film and our conversation about it afterwards.

I love that cinema can be used purely as a form of entertainment or as a form of education, a starting point for discussions and acting as a unifying force. Alternatively, I have recently started going to

the cinema alone as a way to digest what I have seen and heard in my own time. Time to shut off from reality, time for introspection.

Collective emotions Mariana, 27

To me, cinema is a place to experience different stories. I use cinema to enrich my internal world, showing me new possibilities and ways of seeing. It's a place where I can safely explore, experiment, and share ideas. Film is an amazing medium that can encourage critique of the way we live and the expectations we have for society, inspiring discussions and visions for potential futures.

I also love the act of watching a film in the cinema. While sitting in a dark room with your friends, family, or strangers, you can experience emotions as a collective, intensified by the people surrounding you. For that brief moment, there is a connection between you and every person in that room. I am also very grateful that these experiences have brought me closer to fellow film lovers, allowing me to create my own community.

Chronic Youth Film Festival is our annual festival curated by the cohort of our Young Film Programmers Scheme, a talent development programme where young people work collaboratively to learn about film programming and curation alongside the Barbican Cinema team.

Chronic Youth Film Festival

26–27 Apr Cinemas

Don't miss

Barbican Community Choir

Do you enjoy singing? Would you like to share the joy and enrichment of singing with others? Join our new community choir.

13 Feb – 24 Apr 6.30pm, Frobisher Rooms 1–3

Support us

The Barbican sparks creative possibilities and transformation for artists, audiences and communities – to inspire, connect, and provoke debate.

As a not-for-profit, we need to raise 60% of our income through fundraising, ticket sales, and commercial activities. With the help of our generous supporters, we are able to share the work of some of the most inspiring and visionary artists and creatives, enabling the widest possible audience to experience the joy of the arts.

There are many ways you can support the Barbican, including by making a donation, joining our programme as a sponsor, or becoming a Member.

To find out more and join our community, please visit barbican.org.uk/supportus © Rachel Shnapp. or contact development@barbican.org.uk.

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