

barbican



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Booking

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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

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[AD] Audio described

Some audio described events are provided for people with visual impairment. Commentary is provided through a headset describing visual action that is essential to understanding the story as it unfolds.

[BSL] BSL-interpreted

These events use British Sign Language interpretation for D/deaf and hard of hearing customers.

[CAP] Captioned

These events assist D/deaf and hard of hearing customers, as well as anyone who may benefit from subtitling.

[REL] Relaxed

A Relaxed event is ideal for anyone who would benefit from a more informal approach to noise and movement in the space, or would feel more at ease knowing they could enter and exit freely.

My picks - Sara Ismail

Sara Ismail is one of our Young Film Programmers who, among other things, organise the Chronic Youth Film Festival, which takes place in April. Here are their recommendations for what to see in March and April.

Guildhall School of Music & Drama: The Comedy of Errors

I adore going to the theatre, it's always an exciting event – and The Comedy of Errors is never stale. Shakespeare's classic farce is a site of respite and transformation, and I always walk out a different person.

22–27 Mar Theatre



The Comedy of Errors © Students on the BA Production Arts programme, Guildhall School of Music & Drama

Changing With The Tides + Live Poetry

I must recommend Changing With The Tides because it's a film event that leaves me in a state of awe, like I've been reintroduced to the world by expanding my perspective.

24 Mar 3.30pm, Cinema 2

Rastak

Personally, I'm fond of folk music for its sense of community and history and Rastak are sure to deliver on that with a magical night of traditional Iranian music.

28 Mar 8pm, Hall

Nosferatu with Sebastian Heindl

Few events compare to the uniqueness of a live, improvised organ soundtrack for classic 1922 vampire film Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror. It's haunting and thrilling and, for a first timer like me, sure to be unforgettable.

16 Apr 8.30pm, Cinema 1



Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror © Eureka Entertainment

Chronic Youth Festival

This year's Chronic Youth Festival promises not just to feature a film for everyone's fancy, but also cross-arts events that bring together occasional cinemagoer and cinephile alike. As for me, I'm eager to discover a common community through these shared experiences.

27–28 Apr Cinemas

To find out about our programmes for young creatives see barbican.org.uk



Gush, showing as part of Chronic Youth Film Festival © NFMLA

Weaving workshops



Christabel Balfour with one of her works, left, and at her loom, right.

If our new exhibition *Unravel: The Power and Politics of Textiles in Art* (see page 16) has inspired you to try your hand at making textile art, we've got just the thing to get you started.

Artist and tapestry weaver Christabel Balfour will be running workshops on how to weave tapestry. Drawing inspiration from shapes, colours and textures of the Barbican buildings, she'll be sharing her skills and knowledge over a series of four-hour sessions. Plus, she'll be working from the Gallery Shop on Level 3, demonstrating how she makes her notable and detailed works.

She first fell in love with the art form as a child, after her mum gave her a toy loom. After studying at college, where she was influenced by Magdalena Abakanowicz, she made sculptural, amorphous

pieces designed to cluster on the floor or hang from the ceiling before progressing into classical tapestry weaving and eventually to rug weaving.

‘One of the amazing things about textiles is that for thousands of years it was the most labour-intensive thing that humans did,’ she says. ‘Now we have fast fashion and people just think it’s just a throw-away product. I hope the demonstration will show people that even though we now have machines that do it really quickly, there are still parts of textiles that always have to be done by hand. And we need to be mindful of how long these things actually take, and respectful of the labour that goes into them.’

Weaving workshops

13, 14, 27 & 28 Apr, 5 May 10am–4pm

Weaving demonstrations

7 Apr, 4 May 12–3pm, **8 May** 5–8pm, **16 May** 4–7pm, Art Gallery
Free

To find out about our programmes for young creatives see barbican.org.uk

Prepare to Submit to Love

Submit to Love Studios is home to a group of artists living with a brain injury. Some of their work was exhibited at differently various, a ground-breaking installation in The Curve last year in partnership with charity Headway East London. Demonstrating the complexity and creativity of people affected by brain injury, the artists also produced a range of products which are available in our Shop and online at barbican.org.uk/shop. Artists receive royalties from the sale of each product.

Snakes and Ladies A5 softcover notebook, £8.95

Before her brain injury, Tirzah Mileham was a seamstress and pattern cutter. At Submit to Love Studio, she continues to develop her eye for technical patterns, including a large-scale pen and ink drawing Snakes and Ladies, a crop of which features on this eye-catching notebook.



Bursting into Colour by Donna Rogers knitted scarf, £25

In her everyday life, Donna Rogers experiences colours as intruders, affecting her vision and threatening seizure. Yet she has taken this and turned it into inspiration for her artwork, creating an optimistic and joyful atmosphere. Sections of her Bursting into Colour have been interpreted in this scarf.



I Can't Remember Fuck All fridge magnet, £3.50

Former DJ and Chapel Market stallholder Tony Allen's art is characterised by dense pattern and colour that he returns to again and again, working on details that would go unnoticed by the casual observer. This wry fridge magnet expresses his experience of brain injury.



Dalek by Jason Ferry knitted scarf, £25

Using colour to create strange, hallucinogenic visions that shimmer like a kaleidoscope, this scarf features details from Jason Ferry's Dalek. The faces in his work are often contorted in painful ways, with glassy eyes and rictus grins, echoing the way Ferry experiences his seizures.



The threads of human history

An enormous, dramatic new artwork brings bold colour to our famous Lakeside terrace and raises thought-provoking issues.

Ghanaian artist Ibrahim Mahama's first large-scale building commission in the UK sees him hang 2,000m² of spectacular handmade pink and purple woven cloth over large sections of our iconic concrete-clad building. It was commissioned to coincide with our major new exhibition, *Unravel: The Power and Politics of Textiles in Art*, which explores how textile artists have challenged power structures through their work.

The location of this bold new work in one of our public spaces reflects Mahama's strongly-held belief that art belongs to everyone. A rising star in the art world, he is known for his colossal projects and installations, which he frequently creates from his base in Tamale, northern Ghana. His work uses collections of objects and materials that carry stories of individuals, groups, and wider socio-political issues and explores how these objects have been traded and understood in his home country and globally.

Named after the debut novel by Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* comprises vast textile pieces that are hand-sewn from strips of woven fabric to a precise plan to fit the outside of our building. The pieces are so large that, on days when matches weren't taking place, the artist rented out the Tamale football stadium so the work could be spread out on the floor as it was sewn by hundreds of women from local sewing collectives.

The communities Mahama lives and works in are central to his practice, and his art celebrates the value of human labour. For the Barbican commission, he collaborated with Tamale weavers and

sewing collectives to make the material that will adorn the Lakeside buildings, a process Project Curator Sophie Persson visited Ghana to see in November. 'The women would go there with babies and children and sit there and work on it in the stadium,' she says.

'Mahama's work seeks to re-examine Ghanaian history and culture,' she explains. 'He wants to take away the colonial framework within which Ghanaian history is known – in the country and abroad – and instead focus on Ghanaian people and the labour that went into the colonial systems that underpin Ghanaian societal structures today.'

A trained painter, Mahama is concerned with surface, texture and the history they are infused with. The bush-hammered surface of the Barbican, with its hand-crafted dimples and dents, was of particular interest to Mahama, especially because of his keen interest in labour. 'The star architects of the Barbican, Chamberlain, Powell and Bon – are well-known and acknowledged, but the labour that went into making the iconic finish on the building was created by hundreds of people who are often overlooked in the telling of the Barbican's story of the building,' says Persson. 'But all that history is imbued in the texture of the building. When making this work, Mahama wanted to prioritise the building and pay homage to the hand labour that went into creating one of the world's most famous arts institutions. The hand-crafted fabric from Ghana creates a link with the manual labour that went into the exterior of the Barbican.'

The fabric will have 100 smocks embroidered onto it. These robes, called batakaris, were worn by Ghanaian kings and come from a collection of over 400 that Mahama has acquired over many years.

The batakaris are symbols of lineage of power, saved by families over generations. The threads and weave carry with them memories and impressions of the body, and of power and history, bringing a potent presence of traditional Ghanaian society to the work.

‘Being stitched to a covering that will face all that the British weather can throw at it means the batakaris will inevitably be affected by exposure to the elements,’ says Persson. ‘Mahama is very aware of this and sees it as another stage in their history.’

Adding to the layers of history and meaning in this work is the fact that the Barbican’s location was once the centre of the rag trade, while the capital’s links with slavery add further dimensions.

The colourful pink and purple fabrics are intended not only to brighten up the landscape but also to reflect an allyship with marginalised communities here and in Ghana. ‘Mahama believes that the making of his artworks should be connected to their local contexts and the lives of those communities’, says Persson. ‘The vibrant hues of this particular work are a notable departure from his usual palette’.

This jaw-dropping installation was commissioned by our Head of Visual Arts Shanay Jhaveri, who says: ‘Purple Hibiscus is the second site-specific installation in our newly-inaugurated series of public commissions. It carries forward our commitment to activating the various public spaces of the Centre, and connecting with a wider audience.’

‘Building on the success of Ranjani Shettar’s sensitive response to the Conservatory, Ibrahim too has conceived a work that is borne and deeply rooted in its own context but compellingly engages in a dialogue with the Barbican and its own material history. It will

transform the Lakeside into a space and site for the commemoration of community, intergenerational memory and solidarity. We look forward to sharing this monumental work with audiences in April.'

Purple Hibiscus

From 10 Apr Barbican Lakeside

Free

Unravel: The Power and Politics of Textiles in Art

Until 26 May See page 16 for further details **[AD] [BSL] [REL]**

Purple Hibiscus has been made possible by Tia Collection. Additional generous support from The Ampersand Foundation and The African Arts Trust.



All images: Purple Hibiscus 2023–24. Courtesy Ibrahim Mahama, Red Clay Tamale, Barbican Centre, London and White Cube

A feat of engineering

Made up of around 2km of fabric, the huge artwork weighs a total of 20 tonnes. To hang such an enormous work from our Grade II listed building involves considerable engineering experience. It also needs to be able to withstand wind and keep noise to a minimum. Buro Happold, the engineers who are working on the Barbican Renewal project, are behind the installation of Purple Hibiscus.

The enormous fabrics have been made to a 'cutting pattern' and are being hung using a system of straps, ratchets and weights. They have to be fitted closely to the building in order to avoid issues around noise and wind. But as well as it being a feat of engineering, it also has to work according to Mahama's vision. The whole process is a balancing act that he's been very involved in.



Who is Ibrahim Mahama?

Born in 1987, Mahama's work explores themes of commodity, globalisation and economic exchange as reflected in the history and culture of his home country, Ghana. He is known for large-scale installations and has exhibited widely internationally with significant presentations from the past year, including Kunsthalle Osnabrück in Germany, the Sharjah Biennial and the 18th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia.

Rigorous research informs his practice, bringing historical references, stories and customs to the fore in his choice of materials – be that jute sacks, shoe boxes, train carriages, window frames or sewing machines. Trained as a painter, Mahama is interested in materiality and texture. Materials and the memories embedded within them speak of lives bound up in distributions of power that reflect enduring cultural and economic disparities.

Mahama's art reflects solidarity with the many communities he works with and employs in Ghana to realise his artistic vision. Believing that art should be for everyone, he runs the Savannah Centre for Contemporary Art (SCCA) and Red Clay Studios in his home city of Tamale. He shares his work and the facilities with the local community, including local artists and schoolchildren. The SCCA is an open space for anyone to come and learn about not only his work but also Ghanaian history, culture, and the contemporary cultural scene.

Mahama is tireless in his work for transparency and communication between the histories and connections reflected in his works and the lives of Ghanaians outside of the commodified and exclusive environs of the art market.

Discover green spaces in the City

The City of London may be renowned as a centre of commerce, but it also hides some glorious green spaces. Here are some gems you can find close to the Barbican.



St Dunstan in the East Church Garden

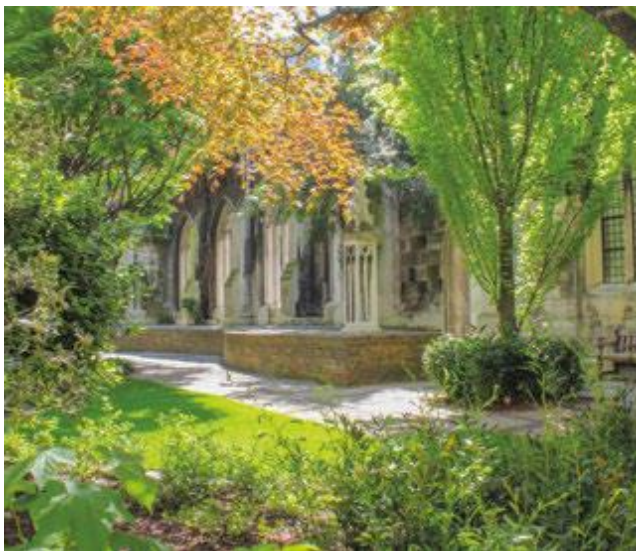
Christopher Wren rebuilt parts of this church after it was severely damaged in 1666 by the Great Fire of London. His tower, with its intricate steeple and some of the old church walls survived a bombing in the Blitz of 1941, and it's now open as a peaceful space with award-winning landscaping.

Seething Lane Garden

Once the site of the naval office where diarist Samuel Pepys lived and worked in the 17th century, you can stroll around this new garden and admire 30 carved stone slabs illustrated with symbols linked to his life, plus look out for a statue of the famous Londoner himself.

Postman's Park

The Postman's Park features a Victorian monument to people who lost their lives saving others. It's also a tranquil spot to have a bite to eat or take a break from the bustle of the day-to-day.



Discover more green spaces, and more things to see and do in the City at thecityofldn.com.

Art & design

Unpicking the power of textiles

As we prepare to open a major new exhibition about how artists have used textiles to share issues of political and social importance, Assistant Curator Diego Chocano shares his passion for the often-overlooked art form.

Textiles are something most people take for granted, yet they're so important. They're like a second skin: we're surrounded by them from the moment we're wrapped in the blanket as a new-born to the clothes we're buried in.

That's why I find it fascinating to think of them in a more concerted way; to consider their histories and politics. I'm captivated by the threads of history, labour, gender dynamics, racial dynamics, knowledge systems that all weave together when it comes to textiles. It's just as important that people rethink their understanding of works which have frequently been relegated by colonial and patriarchal hierarchies of value.

Historically, textiles have been relegated from fine art context largely because of gendered and racialised associations. Textile making, knitting, stitching and weaving were thought of very much as "women's work" or as "craft" if made by Indigenous people and African Americans, rather than art. Yet for hundreds of years, marginalised peoples have taken this ideological baggage and used it to further their own political ideas. A well-known example in this country is the Suffragettes, who played with the idea that textiles were a docile woman's pastime to create very politically-charged banners. There are examples similar to this to discover in our major new exhibition *Unravel: The Power and Politics of Textiles in Art*, which travels across the world from the 1960s to today to explore the transformative and subversive potential of this art form.

Among the artists on display is Judy Chicago, who collaborated with women to embroider powerful and realistic depictions of birth and other images that she felt were missing from Western art history.

Another example of the subversive power of textiles is Indigenous people across Latin America preserving and disseminating their textile traditions. This was an inherently political act because for centuries, colonial powers tried to erase this knowledge. We're showing the work of Antonio Pichillá, a Guatemalan artist of

Maya-Tz'utujil descent, who chose to work with textiles in a defiant act against power structures that suggested Indigenous ways of making were lesser than Western ways.

There are so many amazing artists who have harnessed the political potential of textiles and they deserve to be seen. And while there's more of this art form being exhibited in galleries, it's still comparatively rare. That's one of the reasons we wanted to make this exhibition, plus that not enough attention has been given to the political dimension of the artform.

For me, a large part of the show is asking ourselves why do we value what we value, and why do we not place importance on other things? It's an intriguing question...

Unravel: The Power and Politics of Textiles in Art Until 26 May Art Gallery [AD] [BSL] [REL]



Faith Ringgold, *Tar Beach 2*, 1990–1992. © Faith Ringgold / ARS, NY and DACS, London, Courtesy ACA Galleries, New York 2023 and Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, London. Photo: Benjamin Westoby.



Tracey Emin, NO CHANCE (What a Year), 1999. © Tracey Emin. All rights reserved, DACS 2023. Photo © Stephen White. Courtesy White Cube.

Don't miss

Architecture on Stage

See and hear about the latest architectural thinking in one of London's most important architectural landmarks at a series of talks given by the most exciting architectural practices working across the world. Find the latest programme on our website

Ranjani Shettar: Cloud songs on the horizon

A spectacular site-specific commission by the Indian sculptor, in her first major institutional show in Europe. Featuring handcrafted, largescale sculptures suspended across the entire Conservatory, created using techniques adapted from traditional Indian crafts.

Until Jul Conservatory Free

For our full programme see barbican.org.uk

Addressing the imbalances in art history

Art, literature, film, and music combine with the world of gay subculture as artist Soufiane Ababri transforms The Curve for his first solo exhibition at a major UK institution.

Ababri's commission was inspired by the crescent shape of the gallery which he says reminded him of the curling form of the Arabic letter Zayin (ز). This is the first letter of the word 'Zamel', a derogatory term for gay men deriving from 'Zamil', meaning close or intimate friend. In the Maghreb, where Ababri hails from, the buzzing sound of this letter is sometimes used to intimidate members of the gay community, insinuating the insult without saying the word out loud. Ababri takes the transformation of Zamil into Zamel as his starting point to explore how language has been weaponised.

'I hope to use the structure of The Curve to reflect on social determinism – how my own experiences of harassment and the insult "zamel" have shaped my response to this space,' he says.

The piercing and vibrant images of Their mouths were full of bumblebees but it was me who was pollinated draw on the diasporic and queer experience to challenge accepted norms of representation and explore the role of clubs as places of collective emancipation.

Portraying fictional and real situations, these bold images of desire, play, sex, and gender roles push back against limiting and overly-defined views of LGBTQI+ identities. Often intimate and humorous, his work acts as a form of resistance against the systematic oppression faced by minorities due to homophobia and racism.

Soufiane Ababri: Their mouths were full of bumblebees but it was me who was pollinated

13 Mar – 30 Jun The Curve **Free** - Supported by Fluxus Art Projects



Soufiane Ababri, *Bedwork*, 2023. © Soufiane Ababri. Photo: Rebecca Fanuele.

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

Why Denis Villeneuve's sci-fi films are out-of-this-world

With *Dune: Part Two* set to hit our Cinema in March, Aaron Stennett explores how director Denis Villeneuve creates such compelling worlds in his other films.

From the bleakness of *Sicario* to the raw intensity of *Prisoners*, French-Canadian film director Denis Villeneuve revels in building worlds that are grounded in hyper-reality. Although counterintuitive, this attention to real-life detail is why Villeneuve is one of the world's most acclaimed sci-fi directors.

Few can remember the detail of the plot of 2001: A Space Odyssey. It was the spacewalking, video calls, ready meals and HAL 9000 that cemented Kubrick's masterpiece in the hearts of film lovers. These details, just on the boundaries of the fantastical, build a believable world. And once the audience has been taken into this world, the human dramas at the centre of so many classic sci-fi films can play out.

This is something that Villeneuve has both understood and taken to the next level in his projects to date. In 2016's Arrival, the conventional sci-fi is flipped on its head as language takes centre stage. An alien landing becomes a parable for how distant we are from one another. Even 'replicants' pine for love in Blade Runner 2049 – perhaps love is a universal desire that goes beyond humanity, Villeneuve asks?

Worldbuilding was taken to the next level in Dune, arguably the Hollywood hit of 2021. Frank Herbert's sci-fi tome was long thought to be unfilmable – just ask David Lynch, whose 1984 adaptation bombed at the box office – but Villeneuve proved that his combination of cutting-edge filmmaking and human drama was more than up to the task of bringing this epic tale to life.

Planting microphones underneath the sand of Jordan, where the film was made, Villeneuve's team extracted otherworldly soundscapes from the desert, created something unfamiliar and yet evocative. You really can believe that colossal sandworms are slithering beneath the sandy depths in Dune.

What will the maestro do next to pull us into the magnificent worlds he conjures? We'll have to wait until March 1 to find out, when Dune: Part Two hits our Cinema...



Denis Villeneuve. © Warner Bros. Pictures

Coming up

Oscar Week

Awards season is here, so we're rolling out the red carpet, popping the prosecco and getting ready to celebrate the biggest films of the year with titles nominated in the 96th Academy Awards.

8–14 Mar [AD] [CAP]

Human Rights Watch Film Festival

Human Rights Watch Film Festival is back with a line-up of compelling films and conversations with filmmakers and human rights advocates. Change starts here. Be part of it.

14–22 Mar [AD] [CAP] [REL]

Queer East

The festival showcasing rarely seen LGBTQ+ cinema from East and Southeast Asia returns.

17–24 Apr

Chronic Youth Film Festival

A showcase of films curated by a group of Young Film Programmers. This year's festival highlights films focused on the reclamation of land, heritage and self.

27–28 Apr [AD] [CAP]

For our full programme see barbican.org.uk

Smashing sexual stigmas

Cinema curator Alex Davidson on the ground breaking, sex-positive work of two gay filmmakers working in the 1990s.

I first saw the *Gay Man's Guide to Safer Sex '97* when I was at university, on a VHS tape I had finally built up the courage to buy from HMV. It was like nothing I'd ever seen before – frank and unashamedly sex-positive. Advice was delivered by medical consultant Mike Youle, lying shirtless across a bed next to the interviewer. Steamy sex scenes were accompanied by a pumping techno score. At the time, there was still a great stigma for gay men living through the AIDS crisis, and such a bold approach was inspiring and empowering.

It's a follow-up to a previous *Gay Man's Guide* made in 1992, which we showed at the Barbican in 2022. A lot had changed regarding medical developments in HIV treatment since the first film, and in 1997 director Rob Falconer made this powerful follow-up. Now, 25 years later, he's revisited the film and we're premiering his director's cut, followed by a discussion about the film.

'I don't think any of us realised at the time just how prophetic the second *Gay Man's Guide* film would turn out to be,' Rob told me. 'Its perspective, too, was markedly different: about living with – as opposed to just avoiding – HIV. The trailblazing sex scenes, restored to their former glory, remain as sex-positive and as direct a challenge as they ever were to those who'd prefer our sexual reality as gay men stays in the shadows.'

It's not the only celebration of Queer talent we'll be showing in spring. The beautiful and haunting shorts of Australian filmmaker Stephen Cummins (1960–94) remain almost unknown in the UK. Gorgeous, punchy and often very sexy, these experimental films explore gay male experience in the 1980s and early 90s, from battling homophobia to passionate scenes of intimacy which were banned from Australian TV for their eroticism.

Highlights include *Resonance*, his award-winning short exploring the aftermath of a homophobic attack, and my personal favourite, the jaunty and joyous *Body Corporate*, in which a construction worker trips the light fantastic – in heels.

Cummins developed HIV-related lymphoma and died in 1994, aged just 34. This screening of his films, part of our regular *Experiments in Film* strand, is essential viewing for any lovers of daring Queer cinema and a tribute to his vision.

The Gay Short Films of Stephen Cummins 18* + Introduction

Experiments on Film

27 Mar 6.30pm, Cinema 2

Gay Men's Guide to Safer Sex 97 18* + ScreenTalk with director Rob Falconer

30 Apr 6.30pm, Cinema 1

New movies I'll be rushing to see on the big screen

New Release Curator Sonia Zadurian looks ahead to some of the exciting films you can see in our cinemas this spring.

Our glittering Barbican Oscar Week series runs from 8–14 March, but the 2024 Awards season comes to a reluctant close with the Academy Award ceremony on Sunday 10 March. As the stars put away their spectacular gowns for another year and find just the right shelf space for their precious golden statues, audiences could be forgiven for worrying that high-quality, hotly-anticipated films might suddenly disappear. However, here at the Barbican, we're looking forward to a fascinating, wide-ranging and downright delicious crop of new releases to keep the senses well and truly fed. Here are just a few to whet your appetite...

Documentary *High & Low: John Galliano*; is released on 8 March – a fascinating portrait of the legendary fashion designer, exploring his creations as well as his controversies. Academy-Award winning director Kevin Macdonald (*One Day in September*) produces a work which is both critical and complimentary. We're delighted he'll be coming here for a preview ScreenTalk on 6 March.

On 15 March, director Hirokazu Kore-eda (*Shoplifters*) is back with his Queer Palm winner *Monster*, a thriller in which a mother demands answers from a schoolteacher when her son begins acting strangely. Then Sam Taylor-Johnson (*Nowhere Boy*) brings us *Back to Black* (12 April), a biographical drama charting the rise to fame of Amy Winehouse. Marisa Abela (*Industry*) looks pitch-perfect in the lead role, with stellar support from Jack O'Connell (*Ferrari*) and Lesley Manville (*Phantom Thread*).

Finally, on 26 April comes *Challengers*, a romantic drama focussing on a former tennis prodigy (Zendaya) married to a champion on a losing streak. With director Luca Guadagnino (*Call Me By Your Name*) at the helm, this is set to be one of the biggest releases of the season.

There are so many more titles out there to enjoy during this period and we can't wait to share them with you.

Get money off tickets

Barbican Members enjoy 20% off cinema tickets*

Aged 14–25?

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

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



Challengers. © Warner Bros. Pictures

Classical Music

You've heard K-pop, now discover K-classical

Explore the parallels and contrasts between Korean and Western music, as soprano Hera Hyesang Park and pianist Bretton Brown share the common threads that unite different cultures.

This diverse programme sees a Korean boat song and Caplet's boat bob alongside Rossini and Hahn's gondolas. There are floral tributes from Alma Mahler and Samuel Barber, as well as spiritual reflections from Errollyn Wallen and Thomas Frederick Dunhill.

'Brett and I wanted to mix Western and Korean music, and find a collaborative bridge,' Park says. 'We wanted to explore music in a thematic way rather than by historic period.'

The recital is also an opportunity for Park to share her roots, a prospect she says is particularly exciting. 'Recognition of Korean culture is growing around the world and many more people are interested in it now,' she says. 'I like to share Korean music – the rhythm and the melodies are quite exotic to Western ears and I enjoy introducing my roots to audiences who are not familiar with this music – I'm sure they'll love it.'

Park says the rise of K-pop and the popularity of Korean dramas such as Squid Game has helped boost interest in the country's folk music. 'In the past, I think Asian musicians in the West were focused on proving themselves as performers. So when there was an opportunity to sing a recital, we were focused on the Western classical repertoire so that we could be hired. But nowadays, times are changing and there are more opportunities for audiences to

hear Korean music. So now is the time for Korean performers to show who we really are and audiences are loving it. I feel like we're living in a more liberal society, so people have the courage to show their true selves. It doesn't matter your race or gender. And that's wonderful. I think some people don't know or expect that we have songs or lieder of our own, but when I sing them they love it.'

Hera Hyesang Park and Bretton Brown

1 Mar 7.30pm, Milton Court



Hera Hyesang Park © Chun Youngsang

Links between contemporary and Renaissance music you might find surprising

Discover what unites music separated by centuries at a concert by one of the world's finest and most innovative guitarists, and Scotland's best-known Baroque ensemble.

While at first it may seem counterintuitive, early and contemporary music have much in common. Intimate, other-worldly and unconventional, the works may be separated by hundreds of years, but they sit very well alongside each other, as a concert by Scottish guitarist Sean Shibe and Scotland's foremost Baroque ensemble, the Dunedin Consort, will highlight.

Travel back to the 17th century through Renaissance lute music from Scotland including tunes from the Rowallan and Straloch manuscripts, and English composer John Dowland's No 1 'Lachrimae antiquae' from *Lachrimae, or Seaven Teares*, its 'falling tear' motif denoting both sorrow and joy.

Alongside these early works will be the world premiere of a new concerto by Canadian composer Cassandra Miller (co-commissioned by the Barbican), a Sinfonia by American composer Linda Catlin Smith, and music by James MacMillan and his one-time student David Fennessy.

Reformations: Concerto with Dunedin Consort and Sean Shibe
11 Apr 7.30pm, Milton Court

Tune in

Enjoy a selection of works and artists you can hear across our programmes and some essential listens on our Classical Music playlist. On your Spotify app search 'Barbican Classical'

Highlights

London Symphony Orchestra:

Bewitching Rhythms – Marsalis and Ravel

The gauzy, sensuous soundscape of Ravel's pastoral ballet is paired with the UK premiere of Wynton Marsalis' jazz-inflected Trumpet Concerto, with Alison Balsom as soloist.

11 Apr 7pm, Hall

Anthony McGill: Milton Court Artist-in-Residence

Delve into the depths of the human experience with deeply personal chamber music by Brahms and Messiaen, performed by clarinettist Anthony McGill and the Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective. A few days later, McGill closes his Artist-in-Residence term with Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Clarinet Quintet, before he's joined by Guildhall School of Music & Drama musicians to play Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Gran Partita.

23 & 26 Apr 7.30pm, Milton Court

Kate Atkinson and the BBC Symphony Orchestra

The author of *Life After Life*, *Case Histories* and *Behind the Scenes at the Museum*, joins the BBC Symphony Orchestra to read from her own work, and share the music that has moved and inspired her. **26 Apr** 7.30pm, Hall

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Contemporary music

Raging against the machine

Norwegian musician Jenny Hval's latest work questions accepted roles of artists in society, she tells us.

Composer, novelist, and artist Jenny Hval has been thinking for some time about the role of the musician on stage. Confessing to feeling deeply uncomfortable with the idea of having to make her personal life public in order to be visible in the music world, she sets out to explore what it means to be an artist today, and the apocalyptic world of cultural politics.

Her multi-disciplinary new show *I want to be a machine* is inspired by German playwright and poet Heiner Müller's best-known play, 1977's *Die Hamletmaschine* (*The Hamlet Machine*), which she studied as an art student.

'I want to investigate how we can be liberated from the roles we play on stage, and to use that to broaden out the discussion into people's roles in real life, politics, as citizens and workers,' she says. 'It's an exploration of the "machine" that we are; how we work, and why sometimes there's no good reason why we do certain things the way we do.'

She adds: 'I've always been very critical of this idea of artists as commodities. There's something very violent about the concept of 'icons', even in my world, where I'm certainly not a celebrity, but I am playing the role of the artist. I'm supposed to embrace sharing my private life on social media and always be within reach of people. But increasingly, I want to resist that.'

Yet this is no dry academic exploration of the idea, as anyone who knows Hval's musical blend of electronics, pop and aesthetics will

attest. 'I'm always interested in getting comfy in any space that I'm in and I try to make the music comfy as well,' she says. 'Because that's when we can share something with the audience and present to them something that we would never be able to partake in on streaming services or even recorded music.'

Bringing together her music with video, stage materials and sound design, *I want to be a machine* is created with multi-instrumentalist Håvard Volden (Hval's husband, with whom she created project *Lost Girls*), sound, video and photography artist Jenny Berger Myhre, and Linn Nystadnes, of band *Deathcrush* (and who has been Hval's sound engineer since 2019).

'I want to use the idea of concert as theatre,' says Hval. 'It's developed into things such as thinking about fabrics – for example, what texture does this sound equate to? What would that look like? Which colour is it? We've found colours, textures and fabrics, stage materials, that will add to the space and the performance, and we'll be showing video to enhance the whole effect.'

Jenny Hval: I want to be a machine

10–13 Apr 8pm, The Pit



Linn Nystadnes and Jenny Hval. © Jenny Berger Myhre

Max Cooper is a true Renaissance man

Barbican Contemporary Music Programmer Chris Sharp tells us why he's excited about the electronic musician and audio-visual artist's latest work.

I first encountered Max's music about ten years ago when I saw a sound installation that he'd made in Amsterdam. Like everything he's done since, it was beautiful and fascinating. What I appreciate about his work is that he's found a musical language which is sensual as well as cerebral. It has this incredible balance – melodic without being schmaltzy and intellectual without being cold.

In 2019, we commissioned Max to make a new piece of music called *Yearning for the Infinite*. He devised a very ambitious multi-screen video projection to accompany the music, and it was really special – coherent and exhilarating. And after a success like that, you immediately think “we should work together again”. It was just a question of waiting for the right project to come along – and when Max said that he'd started thinking about *Seme* it felt like a great fit with our programme.

Max is intellectually very curious. As well as being hugely technically skilled as a musician and producer, he's a scientist, and someone who reads very widely in general. And this is why a project which reflects on Renaissance Italy – which at first glance you might think was a million miles away from the world of electronic music – has a genuine connection

with Max's work. In the 21st century there tends to be quite a divide between people who think scientifically, people who think philosophically and people who think creatively; they're seen as separate ways of using the brain. But during the Renaissance those things were much closer together, and people like Da Vinci, and

many others, didn't see a dividing line between those different areas of activity.

Seme will explore that idea. As I write this, it's still in development, but we can expect more of Max's multi-layered, complex but beautiful electronic music. And, for the first time, he's working in collaboration with live musicians, as well as designers Architecture Social Club who are creating striking multimedia elements.

Because Max is such a meticulous artist, I know this will be spellbinding, but also rock solid in its construction and methodology. I can't wait to see it.

Max Cooper presents Seme

4-5 Apr 8pm, Hall

Generously supported by Trevor Fenwick and Jane Hindley

Why the Hereditary soundtrack is so creepy

Considered one of the scariest films ever made, Ari Aster's debut film Hereditary eschews the traditional jump-scares of the horror genre in favour of being soaked in a feeling of dread which stays with you even after the credits have rolled.

A key part of this atmosphere is the soundtrack written by saxophonist and composer Colin Stetson. In April he'll be joined on our stage by the London Contemporary Orchestra to perform selections from the unsettling film score.

Stetson says he purposefully avoided synths and strings so commonly found in horror scores. And – like the film – he wanted the music to hide in plain sight. '[I used] unconventional methods, using instruments to get different results that don't sound like themselves,' he told GQ.

He says Aster requested that the role of the music in the film was to avoid sentimentality entirely. As we'll hear at this concert, that void creates some very frightening moments indeed.

Colin Stetson: Hereditary + London Contemporary Orchestra
25 Apr 7.30pm, Hall



Colin Stetson

Book now

Anoushka Shankar

Boundary-pushing sitar maestra Anoushka Shankar returns with a new quintet to perform music from her newly released mini-album and earlier gems that have been reinterpreted.

6 Apr 7.30pm, Hall

Adrienne Lenker with friends

Best known as the lead vocalist, guitarist and principal songwriter of Brooklyn-based indie folk band, Big Thief, Adrienne Lenker will perform material from her highly anticipated solo album due for release this year.

27 Apr 7.30pm, 28 Apr 3pm & 7.30pm, Hall

Rone – L(oo)ping with London Contemporary Orchestra

One of the main artists of the French electronic music scene, producer Rone performs the UK premiere of his latest album L(oo)ping with the London Contemporary Orchestra in this electro-classical concert.

10 Mar 7.30pm, Hall

Mew and Danish Chamber Orchestra

Alternative rock band Mew performs a cross-section of their music alongside the Danish Chamber Orchestra at this special one-off UK show.

3 Apr 7.30pm, Hall

The Residents

Experimental music icons The Residents have been creating ground-breaking work for 50 years. The faceless group will perform a rare concert in our Hall.

8 Apr 7.30pm, Hall

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For our full programme see barbican.org.uk

Theatre & dance

Celebrating cycles

The natural cycles of birth and death are at the core of Boy Blue's latest work, co-founder Michael 'Mikey J' Asante tells us.

The idea of evolution is fundamental to hip hop culture. Whenever someone creates an incredible performance, there's always someone else coming up who wants to beat it, to improve on it. You find it at the core of hip hop battles, whether dance, DJing or rapping. Hip hop always wants to be fresh and take things to another level.

It's this concept of constant change that's inspired Michael 'Mikey J' Asante MBE, co-founder of Boy Blue, for the dance company's latest work, *Cycles*.

'There are two major energies that I'm really connected with right now,' he tells us. 'One is the notion of the hip hop dance battle energy, of continuous movement. That's something that we haven't seen in a long time on our stages. A lot of the time we're focused on shapes, lines, the architecture of what lighting can do, but I really want to explore the idea of creating something that pulses, that is consistently pushing forward.'

'The second energy is the notion of the natural order of life, the organic nature of things, from birth to death, sunrise to sunset. It keeps on going, no matter what is happening in our lives, or what is going on in the world.'

'I think sometimes we don't really acknowledge how this world, ourselves and the things that live in and die around us are constantly evolving, shifting and changing. It's like a propulsion.'

He says he finds the idea of this cycle of birth and death very grounding. 'I remember this quote I heard about the last day that a person will utter your whole name, there will be a moment where something comes in to take that place, or your spot on the planet. I thought about all the people who seem larger than life and are now not with us anymore. But their death makes space for someone else to take that mantle. Death is looming, but it should give you energy to want to live and to push forward. You have to decide: is this thing going to be a monkey on your back, or will it give you the energy to push on?'

Boy Blue: Cycles

30 Apr – 4 May Theatre



Boy Blue's Michael 'Mikey J' Asante and Kenrick 'H2O' Sandy.
© Rebecca Lupton.

3 Boy Blue shows not to miss online

Ahead of their latest work, *Cycles*, dive into the incredible world of Boy Blue through these videos.

Blak Whyte Gray trailer

This one needs to be seen in person to really experience its power, but you can get a flavour of the extraordinary Olivier-nominated work from 2017 that catapulted Boy Blue to global success in this trailer.



Boy Blue, Blak Whyte Gray © Carl Fox

Free Your Mind

Take a trip into sci-fi film *The Matrix*, in this incredible performance created by Michael 'Mikey J' Asante, Danny Boyle, Es Devlin, Sabrina Mahfouz and Kenrick 'H2O' Sandy. You can watch it on the BBC.



Boy Blue, Free Your Mind © Tristram Kenton

Emancipation of Expressionism

Choreographed by Kenrick 'H2O' Sandy, directed by Danny Boyle and performed by dancers from Boy Blue, this 2013 production became part of the GCSE dance syllabus in 2016, demonstrating the company's influence on British culture.



Boy Blue, Emancipation of Expressionism © Nicole Guarino

The smash-hit musical of the summer

If you're no Tom, Dick or Harry, get ready to Brush Up Your Shakespeare as Cole Porter's smash-hit musical *Kiss Me, Kate* takes to our stage this summer.

Starring the multi-award-winning Adrian Dunbar (*Ridley*, *Line of Duty*) and Broadway musical Superstar and Tony Award Winner Stephanie J. Block (*Into The Woods*, *9 to 5*), it's 'The ultimate Broadway musical from the golden age' (*Financial Times*) and is Broadway musical comedy meets Shakespeare meets *Noises Off*.

Directed by Bartlett Sher (*The King and I*, *South Pacific* and *To Kill A Mockingbird*) and with a company of over 50 including a full-scale orchestra, *Kiss Me, Kate* features classic songs including *Another Op'nin', Another Show*.

It's the perfect summer musical for 2024.

Kiss Me, Kate

4 Jun – 14 Sep Theatre [AD] [BSL] [CAP]

For our full programme see barbican.org.uk



Three ways to be sustainable at the Barbican

1 - With a strong focus on plant-based foods, Barbican Bar and Grill is a tasty way to help reduce the emissions associated with rearing meat. And we can tell you, the vegan Heura chorizo burger, topped with lime and chipotle mayo, guacamole and jalapeños is absolutely mouth-watering!

2 - Buy a reusable Barbican Architecture hot drinks cup for £5 and get 25p off all coffees and teas in our Cinema Café and Foyer cafes. So you can help save the planet and your budget at the same time.

3 - Be inspired by the biodiversity in the Conservatory. Home to exotic fish, terrapins and over 1,500 species of temperate plants and trees, our Conservatory isn't just a stunning space to wander around, but also teaches visitors about biodiversity and plants that are rare and endangered in their native habitat.



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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.

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