

# Nubya Garcia

## Live from the Barbican

**Start time:** 8pm

**Approximate running time:** 60 minutes, no interval

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change. Latecomers may not be admitted.  
This performance is subject to government guidelines

### Arwa Haider delves into the source of Nubya Garcia's musical inspiration.

When you listen to the music of London-born saxophonist, composer and bandleader Nubya Garcia, her distinctively eloquent, emphatic style hits you from the very first notes. It demands that you are present and engaged, and it evokes an exhilarating headrush of experience and possibilities.

Now in her late twenties, Garcia began playing music when she was a few years old – initially violin and clarinet, before discovering her natural affinity with the saxophone at the age of ten. Her creative inspirations stretch back generations; she has cited the influence of US jazz legends including Miles Davis, John Coltrane and Alice Coltrane, McCoy Turner and Herbie Hancock (she recalls finding a CD of Hancock's 1969 Blue Note album *The Prisoner* in her living room at home, and later catching him in concert as a teen). Her own sound also pays testimony to her family heritage – Guyanese roots from her mother's side, Trinidadian from her father – and the febrile energy of her native London, as well as the vital existence of platforms and performance spaces for youth culture. Garcia honed her skills through early stints in the Camden Jazz Band led by pianist/composer Nikki Yeoh, who would tell her young students: 'you are what you listen to', workshops at the Roundhouse venue, and through the much celebrated musical hotbed Tomorrow's Warriors, originally founded by Janine Irons and Gary Crosby.

In 2016, she graduated from the prestigious Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance; at the same time, her work channels the fiery vivacity of the contemporary live jazz club scene that thrillingly erupted in the capital's nightlife. She released her gloriously soulful debut EP *Nubya's Five* (2017) through the seminal Jazz re:freshed stable, and also proved a central figure of the game-changing compilation *We Out Here* (released in 2018, on Gilles Peterson's Brownswood label).

'London and the UK... is an extreme mix of so many different cultures,' she explained, in a 2017 conversation with Peterson. 'My generation is mixing up dance music, electronic music, heavy stuff with music that we've grown up listening to... London is my home, but I'm now excited to venture further afield, and play with as many musicians, in as many places as I possibly can.'

Garcia's debut album *SOURCE* (2020, Concord Jazz) crystallises these varied elements to beautifully powerful effect, and forms the core of tonight's set-list; it evinces her individual soul and collaborative spirit (she has also made her mark as part of the acclaimed collectives Maisha and the Domino-signed Neriya). It pays tribute to her elders on Caribbean-influenced highlights such as 'Before Us: Demerara & Caura', and pulses with the resonant rhythms of sound system culture and the energy of 21st century social activism. Progressively broad-ranging worldviews and travels (particularly across Latin America) are reflected in tracks including the dreamy 'La Cumbia Me Esta Llamando' (featuring Colombian La Perla). There is an essential unity expounded throughout these broad-ranging numbers, from 'Together Is A Beautiful Place To Be', to 'Stand With Each Other'.

As Garcia told Marcus J Moore in *The New York Times*: 'The focus of this record is about personal power, collective power, collectivism. It's about my heritage, my ancestry, exploring those places and those stories from my parents and my grandparents.'

Garcia is an especially adept storyteller in a live setting, and while 2020 has obviously proved an intensely challenging year for the music scene, one of the summer's most memorable, poignant performances came in the form of her filmed, socially distanced set on the skeleton of Glastonbury's Pyramid Stage, in the year that should have marked the legendary festival's 50th anniversary.

Tonight's headline date sees her return to her live element; she has previously referred to the 'beautiful ecosystem' of fellow musical talents that she works with, many of whom she originally met in youth groups and workshops, and here, she is joined by long-time collaborators Joe Armon-Jones on keys, Daniel Casimir on bass, and Sam Jones on drums, plus special guest Ms Maurice on trumpet.

As Garcia recently told Thomas Rees in *Jazzwise*: 'I think it's very important for elders to teach youngsters their stories, what they've been through, what they've done, because maybe nobody knows. We need to keep those stories alive to give us our history, the real history. In my community, the Black community, that's really important. The message should continue through the generations. It shouldn't be hidden or be deemed unworthy of sharing.'

barbican

Garcia's work taps deeply into these stories, and takes flight with them – its stories, melodies, hooks and rhythms entwined in a perpetual flow.

## Performers

**Nubya Garcia** saxophone

**Joe Armon-Jones** keys

**Daniel Casimir** bass

**Sam Jones** drums

**Ms Maurice** trumpet

Created and produced by the Barbican



The City of London  
Corporation is the founder  
and principal funder  
of the Barbican Centre