

amiina: Fantômas

Start time: 8pm

Running time: 65 minutes – no interval

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change

Reykjavík's amiina revive the historic, criminal figure of Fantômas with a specially composed score set to the silent film's iconic images. Francine Gorman explains more.

At over 100 years old, Louis Feuillade's 1913 crime thriller *Juve Contre Fantômas* will be given a new lease of life when Icelanders amiina present the audience of LSO St Lukes with a performance of their striking original soundtrack, composed especially for the centenary anniversary of the renowned Fantômas film series. With a tailored score as exquisite as it is ominous, and as delicate as it is unnerving, the eminent neo-classical outfit create an immersive and alluring setting in which to experience the film from a new, transformed perspective.

Fantômas is a fictional character created by French writers Marcel Allain and Pierre Souvestre in the early 20th century, a villain from a film series through which he came to be known as one of the most ruthless sleuths in crime-fiction. A dark, dangerous character who could be the root of any unsolved crime, or the dramatic and sinister source of any evil, Fantômas cuts a mysterious, elusive figure, and one who is tirelessly pursued by the obsessive Inspector Juve.

Though depicted in various different manners through the myriad novels and comic books that have been inspired by the Fantômas series, it's Feuillade's silent film collection that has caught the imagination of creators around the world in recent decades, including amiina, whose original compositions have lent a new lease of life to the celebrated serial.

The Icelandic collective are no strangers to taking a visual experience and turning it into a sonic playground, having begun performing original scores to the images of Lotte Reiniger's 1930's silhouette animations for *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella* and *Aladdin* back in 2009. Their interest in this specialised craft continued to develop through to 2013, when amiina were invited by celebrated French musician, composer, and former collaborator Yann Tiersen, to take part in a special Halloween concert in celebration of the centenary of Feuillade's 1913 films. Alongside artists including Tim Hecker and Loney Dear, amiina premiered their tailor-made, distinctive soundtrack for *Juve contre Fantômas* on Halloween at the prestigious Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris, offering up an entirely new aural dimension to the Gaumont restored, timeless images of the films.

Energized by the process and the resulting music, amiina decided to head to the studio to commit this intricately crafted score to record, intending to capture the songs so that they could both stand alone, without the support or context of the film's images, or be experienced alongside the pictures that provided the group with the original visual stimulus. The album was eventually released three years after the initial performance, in 2016, with the band's members concentrating on other projects and solo efforts in the meantime, working alongside the likes of múm, Ben Frost, Kippi Kaninus and more.

Fantômas would become the fourth album to be released by the outfit, whose catalogue includes 2007's *Kurr*, *Puzzle* from 2010, as well as their widely celebrated 2013 release, *The Lighthouse Project*. Having begun as a string quartet in the late 90s, amiina has expanded to embrace further members and in 2018, the band consists of musicians and composers Hildur Ársælsdóttir, Sólrún Sumarliðadóttir, María Huld Markan Sigfúsdóttir, Magnús Trygvason Eliassen and Guðmundur Vignir Karlsson.

Throughout their time together, the artists forming amiina have developed into distinctive musicians and renowned composers, through their close work with the likes of Sigur Rós, Efterklang, Spiritualized and Yann Tiersen, to name but a few. Their illustrious, if somewhat understated, career so far has turned this set of prolific and visionary creators into one of Iceland's most revered collectives, one which both passionately yet effortlessly tread a line between the neo-classical and experimental contemporary genres, heading to wherever else they feel so compelled in the meantime. This project in particular seems to be one that has sparked the collective's creative forces, as they revive the live show to interpret it in further settings, five years after its Paris premiere.

barbican

This live performance provides amiina with the space to let their sonic imaginations run wild, as iconic images from *Juve Contre Fantômas*, one of the most riveting films from the Fantômas series, flash across and behind them. The stage is a vision of inspired instrumentalists navigating their way through portentous rhythmic flickers and dense, driving melodies. Violin, cello, drums, percussion, metallophone, table harp, ukulele and electronics provide the foundation upon which this score fittingly sits, strings being used as much to create a charging pace as they are to translate melody, table harps injecting an eerie sense of uneasiness, as electronic basslines add ambience and depth to the compositions.

Fantômas has proven to be a memorable addition to amiina's rich and growing arsenal of albums and performance pieces, and a project which further cements their status as a visionary, innovative collective that need to be both seen and heard.

Performers

Gudmundur Vignir Karlsson
Magnús Trygvason Eliassen
María Huld Markan Sigfúsdóttir
Sólrún Sumarladóttir



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