

Erland Cooper

with LCO Soloists + Guests

Live from the Barbican

Start time: 8pm

Approximate running time: 60 minutes, no interval

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change.
This performance is subject to government guidelines

Erland Cooper talks to Robin Murray about ushering the magic of Orkney into the Barbican Hall.

Erland Cooper's music is capable of transporting you to another landscape. A musician steeped in the history and geography of his native Orkney, he was able to conjure the archipelago's people and culture through a wonderful triptych of records, one that begins with *Solan Goose*, before passing through *Sule Skerry*, and finishing with *Hether Blether*.

Erland Cooper will bring these records to life, inviting the striking Orcadian terrain into the Barbican Hall. 'It's a real juxtaposition. There's something surreal about it,' he says of an experience that promises to be transformational. 'I want the Hall to feel a bit like the ferry from the mainland to Orkney, just for a night. If I can achieve that, I'll be happy.'

The Scottish composer won't be alone. Working with his NEST group of core musicians including Anna Phoebe on lead violin, soprano Lottie Greenhow, Jacob Downs on viola and cellist Klara Schumann, his work will also be augmented and reinterpreted by soloists from the renowned London Contemporary Orchestra, with additional visual direction from his long-standing artistic collaborator Alex Kozobolis. 'The air just vibrates above your head while classical musicians play,' says Erland. 'The LCO soloists are going to create additional textures of sound or clouds, which should add an abstract, tactile feeling. Playing with classical musicians is like watching a bird of prey. It is sensational to me.'

'It's so unique,' he adds. 'That's what makes live music so great. It's that childish feeling of escapism... I don't want to lose that feeling of pure play, or experimentation.'

Erland Cooper will break down his work into its constituent parts before building anew, uniting with the LCO to conjure something remarkable, exploring a depth of field in sound. Moving from sombre shades to ecstatic bliss, from spells of beatific ambience through to striking, surging songcraft, these waves of sound will crash together, and in the process find some new kind of unity. 'I'll be nervous and excited and tense,' he says, 'but I realise now, my music is about tension and release. It's about stress and letting go. I imagine it's going to feel tense, at first but then we'll all have a moment of release. I don't know when that moment comes – it might come early, it might come half-way through... but when we get that? It's a great feeling!'

Ahead of the performance, broadcaster and BBC 6Music host Mary Anne Hobbs will introduce the show, while you can also expect spoken word contributions from special guests, poet Will Burns and Scottish musician Kathryn Joseph, reading new words by John Burnside. 'You'll never win against a full-capacity live gig. You can't beat it!' he says. 'So instead of trying to compete, I just want to try and create something a little more surreal, something that couldn't be done any other way. It's just playing with little bits of magic. I think we can all do with a bit more hopeful escapism or transportation.'

Something approaching an incantation, the show will use special backdrops and lighting, cinematography that will bring the Orkney spirit into the centre of the Barbican. 'I want to try and get that evocative Scottish sky, which can be huge, light, and dark all at the same time. A sunrise and a sunset overcoming Neolithic stone circles together with some exceptionally talented musicians I'm lucky to share a stage with. To broadcast simultaneously to the highlands and Islands north as well as cities of the south, is a joy in itself.'

A burgeoning composer enveloped in a venue; an audience enveloped in sound: Erland Cooper is seeking to create connections, to build a new form of community that binds an online audience to the Barbican. 'We've all missed spaces like that,' he comments. 'We've all missed the inside of a hall, whether it's a big venue or a small venue. Missing a home, a community, missing the great outdoors... being able to pull them all together and see how they contrast with each other, that's the thing.'

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'This is a new live challenge with part of the audience here and the other at home' he continues. 'It's a strange time but there's hope. Taking inspiration from the natural world is one thing, but bringing that into a real-world environment, and transporting people a little in the process... that's something different. Now that it's happening it feels like there's a sense of responsibility to bring people together.'

An exploration of land and community, Erland Cooper's work bisects space, and the people that utilise it. Inviting us all into the Barbican for an Orcadian metamorphosis, he'll blend his work with field recordings and the sounds of his musicians and soloists from the London Contemporary Orchestra to craft something transitory, fleeting, and beautiful.

Performers

Erland Cooper piano, electronics, vocals

Mary Anne Hobbs introduction

NEST musicians

Anna Phoebe violin, Moog

Lottie Greenhow violin, / soprano

Jacob Downs viola, piano, Moog

Klara Schumann cello

Will Burns spoken word, poetry

Kathryn Joseph spoken word, poetry

London Contemporary Orchestra soloists

Eloisa F Thom violin

Mandhira De Saram violin

Clifton Harrison viola

Bryan O'Kane cello

Dave Brown double bass

Robert Ames & Ben Corrigan new orchestral arrangements

Alex Kozobolis & Erland Cooper additional visual direction

Produced by the Barbican



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