

Klein

+ Lioness + Jawnino

Start time: 7.30pm

Approximate running time: 120 minutes, including interval

Doors: 7pm

Jawnino: 7.30pm

Interval: 7.55pm

Lioness: 8.15pm

Klein: 8.30pm

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change.

This performance is subject to government guidelines

Arwa Haider takes a look at Klein's influences.

There's no simple way to lock down the sound and visuals of British Nigerian artist, composer and director Klein; it's as though she's serving mixtapes for the multiverse. Her material feels at once otherworldly and uncannily relatable; tenderly meditative and fantastically extra; a South London spiritual and a channel-hopping fever dream.

'It's hashtag #free,' Klein quipped in a Resident Advisor interview with Andrew Mensah, as she mulled over descriptions of her work. 'I really am not trying to make experimental stuff,' she added. 'When I made *ONLY* [her 2016 debut collection, released via DIY collective Howling Owl], I was like: "this is an R&B record".'

Y2K R&B, gospel, reality TV, social media feeds, free jazz, classical scores, political commentary and ambient electronica have all resonated through Klein's expressions, yet none of these elements are rigidly defined or predictably placed. She has an unusually alluring way with words and noise, but she also makes silence speak heavy volumes, as demonstrated by her powerful track 'Mark': in memorial of Mark Duggan, who was shot and killed by the Met Police in 2011; its accompanying film transforms Street View point-and-clicks into eerie psychogeography. She has earned her own place on a massive variety of platforms, flowing from the underground impulses of London's Hyperdub label (which released her acclaimed 2017 album *Tommy*), to Utrecht-based classical label Pentatone for her latest album *Harmattan* (2021).

Harmattan takes its title from a weather reference (and a word derived from the Twi language), denoting a parched dusty wind that occurs on the West African coast around the beginning and end of the year. There's an invigorating energy to the album's tracks, as well as the burgeoning realisation that these creative adventures could really go anywhere:

'I've gotten to this point where I'm more confident in what I wanna hear...' Klein explained in the RA podcast. 'Whatever instrument I wanna play, even if I can't play it, I can flip it.'

Klein's music feels constantly reactive; at points, it's also unusually collaborative. On *Harmattan*, the track 'Roc' entwines reflective moods and big city clamour (inspired by Klein's fascination with Jay-Z's Roc Nation entertainment empire); US jazz talent Brandon Woody weaves a mournful trumpet refrain through the shifting soundscapes. Another stand-out number, 'The Haunting Of Grace', grandly summons what Klein has described as 'epic religious drama'; while on 'Skyfall', the plaintive vocal spliced through the sonorous haze turns out to belong to the classical superstar, chat show presenter and political activist Charlotte Church.

These expressions take on further possibilities in a concert dimension, as Klein says: 'The live element can be quite noisy and industrial, but also chaotic and whimsical... it feels like a school project, where I'm constantly developing tiny ideas'

Klein's previous live dates have spanned festival sets to a 'gospel-drone' sermon in Dalston's Gillett Square; her stated future intentions include shooting a 'vampire dance movie' or creating a soundtrack to rival Hans Zimmer. For tonight's Barbican Hall headliner, she will present movement and voice,

barbican

trumpet, acoustic and midi guitar, harmonica and electronics, with a cast of collaborators; urban folklore is served with a certain razzle-dazzle.

In a 2021 interview with *gal-dem*'s Tanya Akinola, Klein explained: 'When I used to go to church with my mum, I was in the church drama groups and I feel like that's kind of shaped into what my shows are. My shows are never that linear. I think it's me putting out what I'm thinking in my head at that time. But I do know that it will be funny, it will be fun, it will be litty, face will be beat, hair will be laid, instruments will be instrument-ing, and people will be living.'

Wherever this night takes us, what's certain is that Klein's scope seems brilliantly limitless; the spirit here remains infinitely hashtag #free.

Performers

Klein movement, trumpet, drums, voice, acoustic guitar, midi guitar, flute

Special Guests

Khush Jandu Quiney movement, horns

Bunny movement, voice

Jawnino movement, drums, voice

Josiane M H Pozi movement, voice

Aminat D Seriki movement, voice

Nellie Owusu movement

Tobias Bradford automated drums and drone trumpet - creation and coding

Klein automated drums, additional coding

Klein music, costume, set

Aminat D Seriki additional costume

hair by cast

Lioness vocals

Jawnino vocals

Produced by the Barbican



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