

Ichiko Aoba & 12 Ensemble present Windswept Adan

Start time: 8pm

Approximate running time: 95 mins, plus interval.

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change.

James Drury sits down with Japanese singer/songwriter Ichiko Aoba to discuss her most acclaimed work to date, uncovering the origins of her debut Barbican concert.

Based on a fictional film, the album tells the story of a girl who lives on the made-up island of Kirinaru and is spirited away to Adan Island, which is shrouded in myths – among which is a fear that those who discover it will never be able to leave it again.

‘Kirinaru Island is an isolated place that is about to undergo some major changes,’ says Aoba. ‘It could be what we call everyday life, or it could be a state of taking everything for granted so it’s hard to believe in miracles. I imagined this island covered with thick clouds. On Adan she is welcomed by delightful creatures such as hermit crabs and migratory birds. The island gives her the courage to step out and dive into an unknown world and discover the gifts that the unknown can give you. It is here that the girl comes into contact with the richness of life and becomes aware that she is part of an ecosystem that flows through her.’

Inspiration for the work came when Aoba was looking at the sea from Okinawa in Japan, while she was following the southerly migration of whales in winter 2019. ‘I crossed over to Zamami Island and discovered the pineapple, grenade-like adan fruit growing there. At that moment I decided that the album title would be ‘Windswept Adan’. That evening, I was eating sea grapes, and they suddenly looked like little living creatures. I felt these “creatures” generated a lot of inspiration from within my body, so I started writing and devised the whole plot. This coincidental experience turned into a story.’

Working with producer and TV composer Taro Umebayashi, creative director Kodai Kobayashi, and the engineer, she made frequent visits to the Ryukyu islands, updating the plot. Then Aoba and Umebayashi worked hand-in-hand on the music – collaborating on every chord and instrumental nuance. ‘Based on the plot and the photographs we’d taken, we worked on the recording, striving to intimately capture the humidity and temperature of the island, the sensation of sweat sliding down my skin, the taste of tears. We worked feverishly on the music, trying to make it sound as good as possible. The studio was like a training camp.’

This concert will be a first-class ticket to Aoba’s vivid imagination, and to discover the unique sound that’s won her an army of fans, despite little press outside her home country. Buckle up for a wonderful ride.

Produced by the Barbican

Performers

Ichiko Aoba vocals
12 Ensemble:
Eloisa-Fleur Thom violin 1
Venetia Jollands violin 2
Max Ruisi cello
Toby Hughes bass

Wayne Phoenix piano
Eulalie Charland violin
Mariona De Lamo cello
Tom Wheatley double Bass

barbican