

Eliza & Martin Carthy + The Restitution with special guests

Start time: 7.30pm

Approximate running time: 120 mins, plus 15 min encore and 20 min interval.

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change.

Mike Barnes sits down with Eliza Carthy to discuss her pioneering 30-year career in the UK folk scene, as she hosts a special commemorative show.

Eliza Carthy's upcoming Barbican concert marks her 30 years as a working musician. It will also be a celebration of her father Martin Carthy's 80th birthday – a little belated due to the pandemic – and a fond memorial to her mother, Norma Waterson, who died in January last year.

As a singer and guitarist, Martin came to prominence in the mid-60s and has remained one of the most influential musicians in the UK folk scene; Norma was a member of the Hull singing family The Watersons, one of the most lauded vocal groups in English traditional music. What were the benefits of growing up in such a musical family?

'Natural confidence when trying to get through doors to people,' Eliza replies, laughing. 'But to be serious, I'm very lucky to have grown up with music in the household and being able to meet musicians from different countries, and to make the connections through to the traditions and my own family history. I had a sense of continuity and a feeling that I had a place in the world as a result.'

As a musician daughter of two major musical figures, Eliza might have felt the need to do something completely different, to forge a separate identity. Was this ever an issue for her?

'My parents never had any kind of a proscriptive idea as to what should or shouldn't be done,' she replies. 'I was taught that it was a natural progression to want to do your own thing. But I went into the family business, and it happens to be that everyone gets a turn, which is just brilliant. There was nothing to rebel against there.'

Eliza was a member of a family group The Waterdaughters from the age of 12 and in parallel to her solo career she sang and played violin with her parents in Waterson:Carthy. In 2014 she was awarded an MBE for services to folk music, but she has also described herself as a 'Modern English musician'. Why did she make that distinction?

'I wanted to ally myself with other modern English musicians, it just so happens that my raw material is traditional music,' she says. 'And I don't see any difference between me, Julian Joseph or Kae Tempest. We're all modern English musicians and all come from different backgrounds.'

Eliza has performed across several styles and has collaborated with a wide range of musicians including Paul Weller, Linda Thompson, Roger McGuinn and Wilco. Since the

barbican

folk revival of the 1950s, traditional music has proved to be a malleable form. But how far has she been willing to push the boundaries?

'I used to have rules about not mixing contemporary and traditional material,' she replies. 'So, before my album *Anglicana* [2003] I had this idea that it wouldn't be fair to the audiences to try to mix the two. I toured a line-up for a while that started with either just me solo or me in a more obviously folk acoustic line-up that would then expand into the *Anglicana* band.'

Her 2022 album *Queen Of The Whirl*, which will be performed in its entirety, consists of 15 songs reworked from her back catalogue and mixes up original and traditional forms, including cover versions of songs by Peggy Seeger and her aunt, Lal Waterson. The musicians in her band The Restitution have all played with her at different points in her career and have a potent collective chemistry and an imaginative approach to the music.

'Everyone just has the best sonic ideas, everyone's a grown up, there's no battling egos, and everyone gets really excited about what everyone else can do. It's such a brilliantly creative atmosphere,' Eliza enthuses. 'I've kept some of the original arrangements but have given them carte blanche on others. "The Company Of Men", had an epic orchestral arrangement by Van Dyke Parks, so turning it into a six piece rock band arrangement is no mean feat. But they did it.'

Martin Carthy is set to open the show playing solo, then he will be joined by Eliza and other musicians including Sheema Mukherjee and Barney Morse-Brown from The Imagined Village, and the band who played on Eliza and Norma's 2011 album *Gift*, augmented by Neill MacColl and Kate St John. The second half will feature *Queen Of The Whirl* by Eliza and The Restitution.

'I've done a couple of memorial shows for mum so far,' she explains. 'The songs are wonderful, the material is wonderful, the arrangements are wonderful. It's difficult and I've had to train myself to get through it, but to say that the audience is rooting for you is an understatement. I'm representing my family to people who haven't seen me since mum died. And I can feel her, and I can feel her voice coming out of me. They want to hear her, and they can hear her, in my voice. I'm looking forward to singing her songs again.'

Performers

Eliza Carthy vocals, fiddle, guitar

Martin Carthy guitar, vocals

Sheema Mukherjee sitar, vox

Barney Morse-Brown cello, vox

Saul Rose melodeon, vocals

Dave Delarre guitar, vocals

Phil Alexander piano

Ben Seal bass, vocals

Willy Molleson drums, vocals

Demus Donnoly double bass, vocals

Neill MacColl guitar, vocals

Kate St John oboe, sax, vocals

Produced by Portico the Barbican Centre



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