

ECHO Rising Stars: Vanessa Porter

Start time: 6.30pm

Approximate running time: 75 minutes with no interval

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change

Programme

Vanessa Porter *Folie*

Vinko Globokar *?Corporel*

David Lang *Anvil Chorus*

Georges Aperghis *The Messenger*

Emil Kuyumcuyan *Shapes*

Georges Aperghis *Le corps a corps*

Alexander Sandi Kuhn *À Deux*

Ahead of her long-awaited performance, percussionist and ECHO Rising Star Vanessa Porter spoke to Lucie Grace about the exhilarating percussion recital she's woven together and the moving concept behind it.

It's no surprise that multi-award winning, multi-instrumentalist Vanessa Porter was nominated by numerous concert halls to join the ECHO Rising Stars programme. The dazzling young German has been turning heads on the European festival circuit for some time with her captivating recitals, a heady mix of emotion and skill.

Porter's was an organic path to performing, her talent first being fostered by her musician father, whose percussion school took up half of their home. Studies at London's Royal College of Music and Musikhochschule in Lübeck followed, before completing her Masters at the illustrious Musikhochschule Stuttgart.

Inspired by people and their inner lives, Porter took a grounded approach to curating her ECHO programme, selecting both revered works and especially written compositions. She enthuses 'sometimes I just walk through cities and look at the people – they inspire me. It's what's around us, real life. This is the most important thing for me and I try to put this in my programmes.'

The programme content is also led by the composers Porter greatly admires – she has selected some of the titans of the contemporary classical canon – and learning the instrument follows. 'When I started to learn Aperghis's *Le corps a corps*, I couldn't play a note on the tombak. And now I would not say that I'm a tombak player, but tombak is part of my family.'

She begins her programme with *Folie*, the opening track on her new album and a piece that, within its short time span, has a powerful effect, irresistibly drawing the listener into a stiller world. It's one in which singing bowls of different sizes are treated to an array of touches, while little strings of small bells offer glistening top notes, the sonorities building through a mix of live and electronic techniques. Just as compelling is the visual element: the way Porter reverentially chooses each instrument gives an almost sacred feel to *Folie*.

The recital quickly makes a challenging shift to Vinko Globokar's 1984 piece *?Corporel* where we see Porter use her body as percussion, inviting vulnerability as much as strength. How does she approach performing this demanding, moving piece: 'It's a bit shocking and it's super strong.' It's not only emotive but physically demanding she admits 'It's super naked because as a percussionist, we are used to having many instruments but in this piece there's nothing but the body and the voice. If you perform it a few times, it gets more normal but the tension is always there.'

Porter's recital may be a solo show but she's anything but a soloist. Her programme features three original pieces commissioned for her, a collaboration she thrives on, explaining 'to talk to other musicians and composers, to play with them and make music with them, is the nicest part of this job. This solo programme in London is not really a solo programme for me. I wrote it with different artists.'

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Working with Georges Aperghis was a dream come true for Porter, who is a huge fan of the luminary Greek composer. He wrote *The Messenger* for her, a commission sponsored for her ECHO concerts. She is a testament and proof – work with your heroes. ‘The first contact from him was before this ECHO tour. He saw my performance of *Le corps a corps* on YouTube and his agency asked me if he could put it on his website. I was so happy because he’s my absolute role model. I love all the music he’s doing. After that my sister got a present for me for Christmas, three years ago, and she actually gave me a lesson with him in Paris.’

Porter performs *The Messenger* in this recital, as well as Aperghis’s venerated *Le corps a corps*; the two pieces lovingly punctuated by a composition by percussionist Emil Kuyumcuyan, titled *Shapes*, which she plays on vibraphone. A colleague from her time at Stuttgart, Porter admires Kuyumcuyan’s adroit skill, ‘I asked him to compose a piece for me saying “please, not too hard” because he is an amazing technical player – crazy, fast and really good’ she laughs ‘And now it’s something in between. It is hard technically, but it’s not hard for my head.’ She ends her bracing recital with soothing tones composed for her by Alexander Sandi Kuhn, a vibraphone piece *À Deux* – the programme reaching full circle. Her show needs to conclude this way, she tells us ‘Alexander is a great jazz musician. I asked him to write a peaceful piece for the end, so my audience can leave my concert happy.’ After her spellbinding performance, there’s no doubt that you will.

© Lucie Grace

Performers

Vanessa Porter percussion

Produced by the Barbican

Nominated by Kölner Philharmonie & Festspielhaus Baden Baden

Supported by the Rainbow Dickinson Trust, Idlewild Trust, Golsoncott Foundation and the Leche Trust

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