

ICA LIVE



Photo by Ebru Yildiz

The Institute of Contemporary Art presents

Love in Exile

Arooj Aftab, Vijay Iyer, and
Shahzad Ismaily

Sunday, October 8

Welcome

Welcome to the ICA's Barbara Lee Family Foundation Theater.

Each year, the ICA welcomes visionary performing artists whose creativity, inventiveness, and imagination inspire us to rethink and reframe our relationship to one another and our world. Their restless, inventive artistic explorations not only showcase their extraordinary talents, but also invite us to gather together and share in the pleasures of live performance.

This fall, we are proud to share with you an extraordinary season of musical performers featuring legendary talents and emerging voices. The remarkable Joshua Redman Group, joined by singer Gabrielle Cavassa, ask us to consider, through song, the meaning of place and home. Arooj Aftab, Vijay Iyer, and Shahzad Ismaily create a mesmerizing, hypnotic soundscape in *Love in Exile*. The ever-inventive singer-songwriter serpentwithfeet explores the tender and beautiful ways queer love blossoms in a nightclub in *Heart of Brick*, featuring choreography by Raja Feather Kelly and direction by visual artist Wu Tsang. Anjimile's haunting vocals belie the strength of his stories of survival, resilience, and spiritual rebirth.

From all of us at the ICA, thank you for coming, and we hope you enjoy your time here.

John Andress

BILL T. JONES DIRECTOR/CURATOR OF PERFORMING ARTS

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Love in Exile Trio
Arooj Aftab, Vijay Iyer,
and Shahzad Ismaily

Voice

Arooj Aftab

Bass and Moog synthesizer

Shahzad Ismaily

Piano and electronics

Vijay Iyer

ICA PRODUCTION CREW

Audio Engineer

Kevin Corzett

Assistant Master Electrician

Calliandra Moos

Assistant Audio Engineer

Kayla Blackburn

House Manager

Carly Martin

Master Electrician

Toni Carton

Biography

Arooj Aftab, Vijay Iyer, and Shahzad Ismaily *Love in Exile* Trio

Written by Jace Clayton

Backstage after their 2018 debut show in their adopted hometown of New York City, Shahzad Ismaily asked Arooj Aftab and Vijay Iyer to huddle together and reflect on what had just occurred. “We felt it from the first moment,” remembers Iyer. “We were mystified and almost silent and said: *I don’t know what just happened. But we should do that again.*” They hadn’t prepared material in advance; the potent chemistry surprised even these seasoned collaborators. A shared focus on collective real-time creation allowed them to weave the bass, piano, and vocals into a breathtakingly unified sound. This was music in the moment. Words couldn’t define it, but the audience felt it, and joined the emotional journey. Staying open to spontaneous co-creation became the band’s defining approach in the half-dozen shows they played before recording their debut album.

Individually, their accolades are substantial — Grammy award winning vocalist Arooj Aftab wows audiences worldwide with her mesmerizing live shows; MacArthur genius and Grammy nominee Vijay Iyer is one of today’s most influential pianists; multi-instrumentalist Shahzad Ismaily’s sensitivity and technical acumen has made him a legend among musicians like the late Lou Reed, for whom he was a session player. Yet the marvel here is how ego disappears as the three players merge to create a singular, gorgeous sound.

One key factor is how Aftab employs her otherworldly voice as another instrument in the ensemble. “I’m mostly using the words to get the sound out,” she says. “I’m not thinking about telling a story.” The voice-as-wind-instrument gels with the synth/keys combination of Iyer and Ismaily that flows together like sunlight and shadow.

More broadly, by trusting in real-time creation — and each other — the band is able to cross-pollinate spontaneity with the accumulated wisdom of a lifetime in music. As Ismaily puts it, “I feel like we’re subtly cueing listeners to say, *Live like this.*”

Love In Exile. Three world-class musicians meet in New York City to forge a singular voice that takes their distinct backgrounds and vast histories of collaboration as a starting point. From there they explore one-of-a-kind performances defined by a sense of timeless beauty and sudden surprise alike.

Upcoming Performances



Photo by Fabian Hammerl

serpentwithfeet: Heart of Brick October 12 + 13

Brooklyn-born musician serpentwithfeet's experimental electronic music tenderly explores passion and love between gay Black folks. *The Guardian* said of his 2021 record *DEACON*, "There can be few albums this year more wholesome, soppy, or unabashedly life-affirming." He joins MacArthur "genius" Fellow Wu Tsang and choreographer Raja Feather Kelly to present *Heart of Brick*, a theatrical dance and musical performance that tells the story of two men finding themselves and falling in love in a gay dance hall and captures the multi-generational spirit of the Black queer community. Combining music created for the performance with material from serpentwithfeet's new album, as well as older songs, *Heart of Brick* is an evocative new work that embodies the sweetness and sincerity at serpent's core.



Photo by Fabian Hammerl

Anjimile
December 8

Anjimile won the world over with the clear-eyed honesty of his first record — a meditation on spirituality and liberation, bolstered by Anjimile's delicate, earthy vocals. *Giver Taker* drew on musical influences ranging from African pop and Sufjan Stevens to a childhood spent in the church. *Rolling Stone* magazine deemed it one of the 50 best albums of 2020. In his sophomore album, *The King*, he continues exploring what it means to be a Black trans person in America.

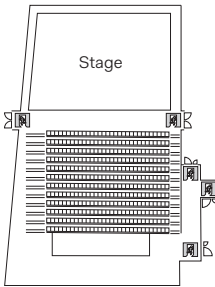
The ICA is pleased to welcome Anjimile back to Boston after a 2021 move to the South. Anjimile first hit the stage in Boston while a music industry student at Northeastern University. He recorded several EPs and albums on his own, and his star rose when his 2018 NPR Tiny Desk Concert contest entry was deemed the best out of Boston. *The King* showcases the perfect marriage between Anjimile's lyricism and musicality and the power of brilliant production.

Membership gets you more!

Join today to begin a year of inspiration and discovery. ICA members enjoy special access to our exhibitions, performances, and events, while also providing vital support to the museum and the arts in Boston.

Learn more about ICA Membership opportunities at icaboston.org/membership or by emailing membership@icaboston.org.

Learn more about the ICA at icaboston.org.



Barbara Lee Family Foundation
Theater Fire Exits

The ICA is supported in part by grants from the Barr Foundation; Bloomberg Philanthropies; the Mellon Foundation; and the Mass Cultural Council, which receives support from the State of Massachusetts and the National Endowment for the Arts.



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