

YEAR
OF THE
PIANO



Ebru Yildiz

23|24 SEASON

 UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

presents

LOVE IN EXILE

AROOJ AFTAB, voice

VIJAY IYER, piano

SHAHZAD ISMAILY, bass

TUES, OCT 17, 7:30 pm

Ramsey Concert Hall

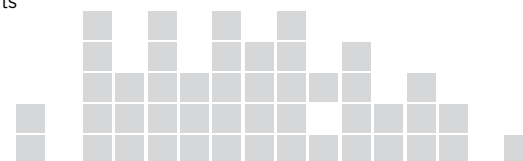
The program will be announced from the stage.

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Please silence all mobile phones and electronic devices. Photography, video and audio recording, and texting are prohibited during the performance.

#ugapresents



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

AROOJ AFTAB, VIJAY IYER, SHAHZAD ISMAILY

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—vocalist **Arooj Aftab**, the first Pakistani to win a Grammy, 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 other worldly 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 flow 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.—Jace Clayton



Hugh Hodgson
School of Music
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

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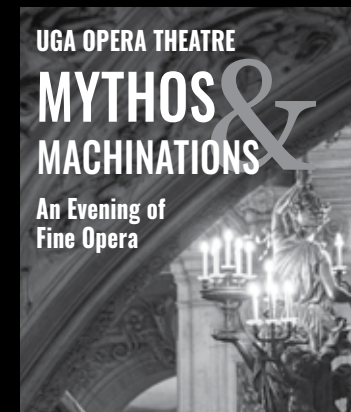
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