

BREATH & HAMMER CLASSICAL PLUS

The BREATH & HAMMER CLASSICAL PLUS program journeys from classical music to improvisation-infused world music to klezmer.

David Krakauer, Clarinet
Kathleen Tagg, Piano

Première Rhapsodie
Claude Debussy

Sonata in F minor Op 120 No. 1:
II. Andante un poco Adagio
Johannes Brahms

Chassidic Dance
Abraham Ellstein

November 22
Kinan Azmeh (arr. Kathleen Tagg)

Berimbau
Kathleen Tagg

Body and Soul
Green, Heyman, Sour, Eyton (arr. David Krakauer and Kathleen Tagg)

Parzial
John Zorn (arr. Kathleen Tagg and David Krakauer)

Moldavian Journey
Emil Kroitor (arr. Kathleen Tagg and David Krakauer)

Synagogue Wail
David Krakauer

Der Heyser Bulgar
Traditional (arr. Kathleen Tagg and David Krakauer)

ABOUT THE DUO

Grammy-nominated classical, world music artist David Krakauer from New York and “mad-scientist” South African sound explorer Kathleen Tagg come together to create a body of work that defies stylistic confines and embodies a celebration of identity, communication and cross-cultural connection. Widely considered one of the greatest clarinetists on the planet, Krakauer has been praised internationally as a key innovator in modern klezmer as well as a major voice in classical music. Tagg is an award-winning pianist, composer and producer who has performed on four continents, and is becoming known for her distinctive sound that mixes together acoustic and electronic sounds, loops, samples and extended techniques. Krakauer & Tagg began working together in 2012, and each year have pushed further against the boundaries of standard concert programming by creating programs that completely redefine the sounds and roles of their instruments. Krakauer’s use of extended techniques, improvisation, and circular breathing on the clarinet, along with Tagg’s prowess inside the piano to remake it as a harp, a zither, a drum, and a cello creates a collective sound that completely transforms these two acoustic instruments.

They began by creating their unique electro-acoustic show *Breath & Hammer* with live video feed, following that with a fully immersive audio-visual surround-sound concert/art installation experience titled *The Ties That Bind Us* with video designer Jesse Gilbert for the Pierre Boulez Saal in Berlin. Their unique programs live at the intersection of classical, world music and jazz, and often incorporate loops, samples, sound design and visual elements. Recent co-composed works include an evening-length collaborative work called *Keepers of the Flame* with musicians from Syria, Ukraine and Poland which was commissioned by the Center for International Dialogue at the Borderlands Foundation in Poland, as well as a *Klezmer Fantasy* for concert wind band written for the Marine Band of the Royal Netherlands Navy. Krakauer & Tagg are thrilled to be further expanding their creative boundaries by co-composing a clarinet concerto to be premiered in 2021 by the Santa Rosa Symphony and conductor Francesco Lecce-Chong. The score for *Minyan* by filmmaker Eric Steel, which Krakauer & Tagg not only co-wrote but also performed and produced, premiered at the 2020 Berlin Film Festival and is their first feature film project. www.krakauertaggmusic.com

PROGRAM NOTES

Première Rhapsodie by Claude Debussy

Claude Debussy composed his *Première Rhapsodie* as a competition piece for the final examination in clarinet in 1910. While many lovely pieces were written for this purpose, one could argue that this is the only masterpiece that has emerged from all the *morceaux de concours* for the clarinet. Taking a small motive from his earlier composition *La Mer*, Debussy has created an incredibly evocative and haunting work that is one of the great representative compositions in Debussy's late period.

Sonata in F minor Op 120 no. 1 by Johannes Brahms

The sound of the clarinet has a great power to inspire. Towards the end of his life, Johannes Brahms, having stopped composing, heard the outstanding clarinetist Richard Muhlfeld play and it awakened something very deep within him. He went on to write four major works- the trio, the quintet and the two clarinet sonatas - Op 114, 115, 120 no.1 and 2.

Chassidic Dance by Abraham Ellstein

The delightful *Chassidic Dance* was originally written for clarinet and piano and was orchestrated in the 1960s. Abraham Ellstein was one of the great composers for the Yiddish Theatre and his score for the 1936 romantic comedy *Yidl mitn Fidl* is one of the classic Yiddish film scores.

November 22 by Kinan Azmeh (arr. Tagg)

Kinan Azmeh is a New York-based Syrian clarinetist and composer who performs across the globe as a bandleader, soloist with orchestra, collaborator with a wide spectrum of artists and genres and member of the Grammy-winning Silkroad Ensemble. This piece was written for a rare Thanksgiving that fell on November 22nd and conjures a feeling of nostalgia for his old homeland alongside an optimism of living feeling at home in a new country.

Berimbau by Kathleen Tagg

A piece that drew initial inspiration from the sounds of the overtone series as played on the Eastern Cape bow instrument *uhadi*, cousin of the better-known Brazilian *berimbau*. The work then gives into a driving motion and groove in seven, and draws on the energy of current New York City and Ellington-like horns.

Body and Soul by Green, Heyman, Sour, and Eyton (arr. Krakauer, Tagg)

Body and Soul is one of the most iconic pieces from "The Great American Songbook"; written in 1930 with lyrics by Edward Heyman, Robert Sour and Frank Eyton; and music by Johnny Green. The song became one of the most widely recorded jazz standards with versions by many of the greatest musical artists of the 20th century including Louis Armstrong, Coleman Hawkins and John Coltrane. Krakauer & Tagg's version pays homage to these great creators and at the same time works within the duo's very personal musical language.

Parzial by John Zorn (arr. Krakauer, Tagg)

John Zorn is an American saxophonist, composer and one of the leading voices in the New York “downtown” arts scene. Under the banner of Radical Jewish Culture, Zorn has explored new possibilities for Jewish cultural identity within the context of the avant garde. This piece, *Parzial* come from Zorn’s massive collection of pieces called *The Book of Angels*, and were originally part of a group of eight compositions recorded by Krakauer and his band “Ancestral Groove”. Later, Tagg adapted Krakauer’s initial basic concepts of these two tunes into full blown arrangements for Breath and Hammer. Here Zorn imagines a portrait of *Parzial: the Guardian of the 7th Heavenly Hall*.

Moldavian Journey by Emil Kroitor (arr. Krakauer, Tagg)

One of the great gatekeepers of klezmer from the region now known as Moldavia was a clarinetist named German Goldenshteyn. German came to New York in 1994 bringing with him his region’s traditional Jewish music. He is believed to have carried nearly a thousand tunes in his head, one of which was this tune which was written by the great Moldavian accordionist and composer Emil Kroitor (b. 1947). Krakauer and Tagg reimagine this piece as an epic journey both geographic and political.

Synagogue Wail by David Krakauer

Synagogue Wail is Krakauer’s own semi-improvised composition for unaccompanied clarinet that’s kind of a portrait of his whole musical world in about five minutes. He takes the basic idea of a klezmer improvisation, mixes it with influences of jazz, funk and minimalism and pulls the whole thing together with crazy extended techniques. It’s a wild ride!

Der Heyser Bulgar (Traditional arr. Krakauer, Tagg)

Der Heyser Bulgar is one of the most well known works from the klezmer repertoire of Eastern European Jewish klezmer music and means “The Hot Bulgar”.