

BREATH & HAMMER ELECTRIC

In this passionate, eclectic and highly personal musical journey, BREATH & HAMMER's extended techniques, loops and samples are enhanced by a multi-camera, immersive video feed designed by Los Angeles-based video artist JESSE GILBERT, allowing the audience to see the pair's unorthodox playing styles at close quarters and in real time.

David Krakauer, Clarinet

Kathleen Tagg, Piano & 'Piano Orchestra'

Video Design by Jesse Gilbert

November 22

Kinan Azmeh (arr. Tagg)

Ebuhuel

John Zorn (arr. Krakauer, Tagg)

Parzial

John Zorn (arr. Krakauer, Tagg)

Shron

Roberto Rodriguez (arr. Tagg)

Berimbau

Kathleen Tagg

Rattlin' Down the Road

David Krakauer

Demon Chopper

Rob Curto (arr. Tagg)

Moldavian Voyage

Emil Kroitor (arr. Tagg, Krakauer)

Synagogue Wail

David Krakauer

The Geyser

Krakauer, Tagg

Note: This program features untreated samples of clarinet and piano created by the musicians themselves. No other instruments or samples are used.

ABOUT THE DUO

The eclectic range of projects that Grammy-nominated, genre-bending, classical, klezmer and world music clarinetist **David Krakauer** and innovative composer, arranger, pianist and producer **Kathleen Tagg** have created is unified by a single mission: to foster human connection through music that transcends stylistic and cultural boundaries.

Krakauer and Tagg's ***Breath & Hammer*** represents a highly personal confluence of many streams: the strong foundations of both performers as classical concert musicians, Krakauer's years as a klezmer innovator, composer, band leader and avant-garde experimentalist, and Tagg's multi-faceted career creating and performing for the stage and theater, as well as her skills as a producer. As with all her previous albums, Tagg produced the *Breath & Hammer* album, which Krakauer describes as "a medieval tapestry the size of an apartment, made up of fingernail-sized samples."

In live performance, ***Breath & Hammer***'s extended techniques, loops and samples are galvanized by a multi-camera, immersive video feed designed by Los Angeles-based video artist Jesse Gilbert, allowing the audience to see the pair's unorthodox playing styles at close quarters and in real time. In addition to their own original material, the music by a global cast of composers – saxophonist John Zorn, Syrian clarinetist Kinan Azmeh, Cuban percussionist Roberto Rodriguez, accordionist Rob Curto, and accordionist and klezmer specialist Emil Kroitov – was contributed in the form of lead sheets, giving the duo full license to bring each piece into their distinctive sound world. Thus the entire undertaking reflects the larger context toward which all of their projects strive: the alchemical transformation of many genres and cultural expressions into one composite, respectful, non-appropriative, musical identity that speaks to an ever-growing cultural community.

In the words of Krakauer & Tagg: "Our sound palette for *Breath & Hammer* is a very particular one that has grown out of our lengthy collaboration. We have each brought everything of who we are and what we have worked on over many years into the mix. The music in this program can be seen as very **global in its scope, but at the same time it is completely personal to us**, given that each composer is a close friend or associate of ours. We used the pieces themselves as points of departure and our arrangements and treatment of each one of them ended up being markedly different from the original. In recasting each composition, we found a way to transform the material in a way that reflected our own personal sound world without literally copying the devices of any particular genre. The sound of each of these pieces therefore represents our own version, transformed from the original in a way that makes sense in our language. We are so grateful to the composers who entrusted us with their pieces and gave us their blessing to do so."

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PROGRAM NOTES

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.

Ebuhuel by John Zorn (arr. Krakauer, Tagg)

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. These two pieces, *Ebuhuel* and *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 portraits of *Ebuhuel*: the Angel of Omnipotence and *Parzial*: the Guardian of the 7th Heavenly Hall.

Shron by Roberto Rodriguez (arr. Tagg)

“*Shron*” comes from the CD “*El Danzon de Moises*” on which Krakauer also performed as a featured artist. The concept for this album was an imaginary Cuban-Jewish music based both on Rodriguez’s experience growing up in Miami as a leading percussionist playing for both Jewish and Cuban celebrations alongside his deep association with John Zorn’s Radical Jewish Culture movement. Rodriguez reworked the traditional Cuban danzon in his imagination to create a music that could have possibly existed for the very small and fragile present day Cuban-Jewish community.

Berimbau by Kathleen Tagg

This is a piece by Kathleen Tagg that drew initial inspiration from the sounds of the overtone series as played on the of the beautiful Xhosa bow instrument uhadi from the Eastern Cape in South Africa, 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.

Rattlin’ Down the Road by David Krakauer

The idea of this piece by David Krakauer came from Krakauer and Tagg’s time spent at Yellow Barn in rural Vermont while workshopping *Breath and Hammer*. The whole rhythmic structure comes from percussive-extended technique clarinet sounds and was inspired by the rattling of old trucks down narrow, dusty country roads.

Demon Chopper by Rob Curto (arr. Tagg)

Rob Curto is a New York based virtuoso accordionist best known as a leading voice in Brazilian Forro music. In this arrangement, Tagg created an entire “West African” drum circle with all the percussion

sounds coming from the piano. The melody, which was actually influenced by Jewish klezmer music coming from Curto's tenure in Krakauer's band, floats over the top, punctuated by percussive riffs. The result is a unique and personal confluence of stylistic ideas.

Moldavian Voyage 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!

The Geyser (Krakauer, Tagg)

"The Geyser" is based on the harmonic structure of one of the most well known works from the repertoire of Eastern European Jewish klezmer music: "Der Heyser Bulgar" or "The Hot Bulgar". This complete transformation of one of the great standard of standards in the klezmer genre creates a totally new piece.