

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

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

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.