

BREATH & HAMMER: DAVID KRAKAUER AND KATHLEEN TAGG

"VOYAGES" Program:

PROGRAM NOTES

"Star clarinetist David Krakauer and acclaimed pianist Kathleen Tagg perform an acoustic program that goes from Debussy to improvisation-infused world music to klezmer."

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VOYAGES

David Krakauer clarinet

Kathleen Tagg piano

Première Rhapsodie

Claude Debussy

Sonata in F minor Op 120 no. 1

Johannes Brahms

1. Allegro Appassionato

2. Andante un poco Adagio

3. Allegretto grazioso

4. Vivace

Chassidic Dance (Abraham Ellstein)

Intermission

November 22

Kinan Azmeh (arr Kathleen Tagg)

Parzial

John Zorn (arr Kathleen Tagg and David Krakauer)

Berimbau

Kathleen Tagg

Body and Soul

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

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

Synagogue Wail (David Krakauer)

Der Heyser Bulgar (Trad arr Kathleen Tagg and David Krakauer)

Program Notes:

Grammy nominated world music star David Krakauer and acclaimed composer/performer Kathleen Tagg come together in a passionate, eclectic and highly personal musical journey called "Breath and Hammer". Krakauer & Tagg share a constant quest to redefine the sounds and roles of their instruments and push far outside the boundaries of the traditional clarinet and piano recital by including extended techniques, loops and samples in a program of compositions by the duo and a host of performer-composers from around the globe.

Breath & Hammer's acoustic program "Voyages", starts with classical music. The journey then continues with Krakauer & Tagg's arrangements of tunes by composers as diverse as John Zorn, Syrian clarinetist Kinan Azmeh and traditional Moldavian master accordionist Emil Kroitor along with original compositions by Krakauer & Tagg that incorporate influences ranging from interlocking African drumming patterns to romantic symphonic music to minimalism to klezmer. These diverse and seemingly disparate musical influences intermingle, transformed into something entirely new, a hybrid art form that bridges the cultures of the past and new work that looks towards the future. www.krakauertaggduo.com

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.

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, “Parzia”, I 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.

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.

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!

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".

About the Artists:

DAVID KRAKAUER

Only a select few artists have the ability to convey their message to the back row, to galvanize an audience with a visceral power that connects on a universal level. David Krakauer is such an artist. Widely considered one of the greatest clarinetists on the planet, he has been praised internationally as a key innovator in modern klezmer as well as a major voice in classical music. In 2015 he received a Grammy nomination in the Chamber music/small ensemble category as soloist with the conductorless orchestra "*A Far Cry*", and a Juno nomination for the CD "*Akoka*" with cellist Matt Haimovitz.

For the past decade Krakauer has emerged as an electrifying symphonic soloist who brings his singular sound and powerful approach to the concert stage. He has appeared with the world's finest orchestras including the Amsterdam Sinfonietta, Baltimore Symphony, Brooklyn Philharmonic, Detroit Symphony, the Weimar Staatskapelle, the Orchestre de Lyon, the Phoenix Symphony, the Dresdener Philharmonie, and the Seattle Symphony.

Highlights of Krakauer's lauded career include performances with the Kronos, Emerson, Tokyo, Orion and Miro String Quartets; performing during the inaugural season of Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall with renowned jazz pianist Uri Caine; an eight-year tenure with the Naumburg Award-winning Aspen Wind Quintet; tours and recordings with Abraham Inc which he co-leads with Socalled and Fred Wesley and performing in the International Emmy Award-winning BBC documentary *Holocaust, A Music Memorial from Auschwitz*.

Krakauer's discography contains some of the most important clarinet recordings of recent decades. Among them are *The Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind* (Osvaldo Golijov and the Kronos Quartet/Nonesuch) received the **Diapason D'Or in France**. *The Twelve Tribes* (Label Bleu) which was designated album of the year in the jazz category for the **Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik**, and Paul Moravec's Pulitzer Prize winning composition *Tempest Fantasy* (Naxos). He has also recorded with violinist Itzhak Perlman/ the Klezmatics (Angel) and Dawn Upshaw/ Osvaldo Golijov (Deutsche Gramophon). His unique sound can be heard in Danny Elfman's score for the Ang Lee film *Taking Woodstock* and throughout Sally Potter's *The Tango Lesson*. New releases include his 2015 album *Checkpoint* with his band Ancestral Groove (Label Bleu), Paul Moravec's Clarinet Concerto with The

Boston Modern Orchestra Project (BMOP sound) and *The Big Picture* on his own label, Table Pounding Records in 2014.

An esteemed educator, David Krakauer is on the clarinet and chamber music faculties of the Manhattan School of Music, the Mannes College of Music (New School), The Bard Conservatory and NYU.

KATHLEEN TAGG

Kathleen Tagg is a South African pianist, composer and producer based in New York since 2001. A 2014 South African Music Awards nominee for best classical album, she has performed on four continents with a host of leading musicians, and the breadth of her collaborations defines her multi-faceted career.

She has performed at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, 92nd St Y and Symphony Space in New York, but is equally at home in non conventional spaces and theater. Her performances and numerous recordings range from classical to world music, musical theater to her own music mixing improvisation with fully realized scores. She holds the Helen Cohn Award as outstanding doctoral graduate of the Manhattan School of Music, as well as degrees from Mannes College and the University of Cape Town. She was on the faculty of SongFest at Colburn in Los Angeles from 2014-16. She has performed throughout North America, Europe, Southern Africa, China and India and her recordings have been featured in film and television. Recent recordings include the songs of Jake Heggie with soprano Regina Zona (NAXOS, 2014) and *Where Worlds Collide* (Table Pounding Records, 2016) with South African jazz pianist Andre Petersen. Her latest recording, *Breath & Hammer* with clarinetist David Krakauer will be released this season. As a team, Krakauer and Tagg have created an evening-length work, *Keepers of the Flame*, for the Borderlands Foundation in Sejny, Poland, as well as performing their *Breath & Hammer* project and genre-crossing concert programs on four continents. Her work was performed and commissioned by the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra, New Century Chamber Orchestra and the Jewish Culturefest Vienna. Her musical, *Erika's Wall*, co-written with Sophie Jaff, received a developmental production by The Music Theater Company of Chicago. She was a 2014-2015 fellow of the Dramatist Guild of America and 2017 Con Ed Exploring the Metropolis Composer in Residence. This season includes a newly designed show with David Krakauer and video designer Jesse Gilbert for the Boulez Saal in Berlin and performances at the National Gallery in D.C., the Nasher Museum in Dallas and a month-long residency at WITS University in Johannesburg. www.kathleentagg.com