



SCRAG MOUNTAIN MUSIC  
PRESENTS

# SPEKTRAL QUARTET

WITH  
MARY BONHAG AND EVAN PREMO



Featuring a World Premiere by composer Eliza Brown,  
plus works by George Walker and Franz Schubert.

Sat., Jan 29 at 7:30 pm  
live-streamed

THIS PROGRAM IS GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY  
THE CUMMINS-LEVENSTEIN CHARITABLE FOUNDATION.

## Program:

*Molto adagio, from String Quartet no. 1 (Lyric for Strings)*

George Walker  
(1922-2018)

String Quartet No. 13 in A minor D 804, Op. 29 "Rosamunde"

Franz Schubert  
(1797-1828)

- I. Allegro ma non troppo
- II. Andante
- III. Menuetto: Allegretto - Trio
- IV. Allegro moderato

*the light that blurred the stars* [World Premiere]\*

Eliza Brown  
(b. 1985)  
Poetry by Susan Stewart

- I. Field in Winter
- II. The Knot
- III. Piano Music for a Silent Movie
- IV. Man Dancing with a Baby
- V. Cinder

\*This piece is a Spektral Quartet / Scrag Mountain Music co-commission

*Nacht und Träume*

Schubert  
arr. Alex Fortes

Spektral Quartet  
Clara Lyon, violin  
Maeve Feinberg, violin  
Doyle Armbrust, viola  
Russell Rolén, cello

Mary Bonhag, soprano  
Evan Premo, double bass

*This residency is generously supported by the Cummins-Levenstein Charitable Foundation.*

*The Spektral Quartet appears by arrangement with Alliance Artist Management.*

## Artist Bios

Multi-Grammy nominees, the **Spektral Quartet** actively pursues a vivid conversation between exhilarating works of the traditional repertoire and those written this decade, this year, or this week. Since its inception in 2010, Spektral is known for creating seamless connections across centuries, drawing in the listener with charismatic deliveries, interactive concert formats, an up-close atmosphere, and bold, inquisitive programming. With a tour schedule including some of the country's most notable concert venues such as the Kennedy Center, Miller Theater, Library of Congress, and NPR's Tiny Desk Concerts, the quartet also takes great pride in its home city of Chicago: championing the work of local composers, bridging social and aesthetic partitions, and cultivating its ongoing collaborations and residencies in the Chicago region. For the 20/21 Season, Spektral is pleased to announce its Digital Artist Residency at University Musical Society (UMS) with Lebanese-born Afro-Tarab/jazz innovator Tarek Yamani. Named "Chicagoans of the Year" by the Chicago Tribune in 2017, Spektral Quartet is most highly regarded for its creative and stylistic versatility: presenting seasons in which, for instance, a thematic program circling Beethoven seamlessly coexists with an improvised sonic meditation at sunrise, a talent show featuring Spektral fans, and the co-release of a jazz album traversing the folk traditions of Puerto Rico. [spektralquartet.com](http://spektralquartet.com)

**Eliza Brown's** music is motivated by sound and its potential for meaning, an engagement with the broader arts and humanities, and fundamental questions about the nature of human existence, social relationships and responsibilities, and sensory experience. Eliza's compositions have been performed by leading interpreters of new music, including Ensemble Dal Niente, Spektral Quartet, ensemble recherche, International Contemporary Ensemble, Network for New Music, Ensemble SurPlus, Quince Contemporary Vocal Ensemble, and Wild Rumpus New Music Collective. Her works have been heard on stages throughout the USA and in Mexico, Colombia, Germany, Hungary, Spain, Canada, and the UAE, and have been recorded on multiple labels. Eliza's work is frequently intertextual, opening dialogues with existing pieces of music, historical styles, and other cultural artifacts. Her work is also frequently interdisciplinary, with a particular focus on music-theater and opera. Recent projects include *The Body of the State* (2017), a music-theater work about the life of Juana of Castile written in collaboration with six women who were at the time of writing incarcerated at Indiana Women's Prison. Commissioned and premiered by Ensemble Dal Niente, this work incorporates the instrumentalists into its staging as a representation of the oppressive, hierarchical family and society that shaped Juana's life. *Prospect and Refuge* (2015), for four female voices, explores how public spaces shape social experience and was created in collaboration with architect Hannah Marzynski, Quince Contemporary Vocal Ensemble, and stage director Emmi Hilger. The piece is designed to be re-staged at each new performance site, with reference to the social history of that particular space. Eliza's artistic interests give rise to questions about the interpretation and meaning of music that drive her scholarship. Her dissertation, *A Narratological Analysis of 'Prima...ins innere'* by Chaya Czernowin, used methods drawn from the interdisciplinary field of narratology (the study of narrative) to examine how Czernowin's opera tells its story by means of music alone, as the singers in *Prima* sing phonemes and vocal sounds rather than words. Eliza is a dedicated teacher who enjoys helping students strengthen their creative voices and engage complex ideas with rigor and enthusiasm. She is currently Assistant Professor of Music at DePauw University, where she teaches composition and music theory. Eliza has also had a long-time affiliation with the Walden School Young Musicians Program, where she spent many summers as a faculty member and Academic Dean. Eliza holds a B.Mus. summa cum laude in composition from the University of Michigan and a D.M.A. in composition from Northwestern University. [elizabethbrown.net](http://elizabethbrown.net)

The "extraordinary" (*Classical Voice N. America*) soprano **Mary Bonhag** captivates audiences around the country with her "marvelous versatility" and "supple, expressive" voice (*San Antonio News*). As a new music specialist, Mary was featured on Resonant Bodies Festival and has sung with 21st Century Consort and San Francisco Contemporary Players. She has premiered or commissioned works by Lembit Beecher, Susan Botti, Evan Premo, Shawn Jaeger, Eliza Brown, Evan Chambers, and C. Curtis Smith. In demand from Carnegie Hall to rustic barns, Mary connects with audiences, drawing them deeply into the music. She frequently performs with Aizuri Quartet, Aeolus Quartet, Decoda, Spektral Quartet and has been featured across the country at chamber music festivals including Cactus Pear (TX), Five Boroughs Festival, Stanford Live, and Yellow Barn. She is co-Artistic Director of Scrag Mountain Music with her husband, composer/double bassist Evan Premo. Mary has presented thought provoking art song recitals at Dartmouth, Smith, Goucher Colleges, and the University of Vermont. She attended SongFest and Tanglewood, where she received the Grace B. Jackson Prize. Mary has been featured on the NPR show Performance Today and appears on Albany Records. [marybonhagsoprano.com](http://marybonhagsoprano.com)

Double Bassist/Composer **Evan Premo** creates heart-centered music that inspires audiences and musicians alike. His music has been commissioned by the Pittsburgh Symphony Chamber Orchestra, River Town Duo, Owen Dalby, the International Society of Bassists, Diana Gannett, Paul Dwyer, The Pine Mountain Music Festival, Capitol City Concerts, and the Montpelier Chamber Orchestra. Premo is a member of Decoda with which he has performed in residencies around the world including four he led in Abu Dhabi, UAE. As a member of Ensemble Connect, Premo has performed in concerts at Carnegie Hall and participated in residencies in Spain and Germany. As a chamber musician, he has performed at summer music festivals throughout the country and has been featured on National Public Radio's Performance Today. Premo resides in Vermont where he is active teaching and performing and is Founder and co-Artistic Director of Scrag Mountain Music with his wife, soprano Mary Bonhag. He is also Founder and Artistic Director of Beethoven and Banjos, a residency that brings together folk and classical musicians for cross-genre concerts in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. [evanpremo.com](http://evanpremo.com)

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## Scrag Mountain Music's Statement of Equity

(For the full statement, please visit [scragmountainmusic.org/equity-statement](http://scragmountainmusic.org/equity-statement))

*Scrag Mountain Music is committed to doing our part to heal systemic marginalization through celebrating diverse voices in classical music. We present physically and financially accessible performances, open to all.*

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**We would like to give a special thank you to Sarah Harding and Mark Ouweleen for generously hosting Spektral Quartet and Eliza Brown this week.**

## Scrag Mountain Music 2021-22 Season Supporters

Scrag Mountain Music's 2021-22 season is generously supported by the Cummins-Levenstein Charitable Foundation, Vermont Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts, The Windham Foundation, National Life Group Foundation, City of Montpelier Community Fund, Montpelier Alive, the Sinex Education Foundation, Vermont Community Foundation, Vermont Humanities, Lawson's Finest Liquids, and Jazz Road, a national initiative of South Arts, which is funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation with additional support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.



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### **Program Notes: *the light that blurred the stars***

*the light that blurred the stars* is a song cycle about human survival and renewal. It is scored for voice and string quartet and sets five poems by renowned American poet Susan Stewart.

In the first months of the pandemic, I felt a few fundamental truths of human existence were distilled and suspended atop my conscious awareness. One: the world is full of suffering and destruction borne of human folly. Another, complementary: humans create – solutions, technologies, new humans, stories, meaning – to survive. Life is still worth living, and the things that make it so worth contemplating and celebrating, however large or small, and however tinged our perception of them may be with the cynicism borne of living the first truth. I'm not the first person to articulate these ideas, nor the last – but I think it's still worth affirming them (and making and experiencing art about them).

In those early months of the pandemic I also read through Cinder, Susan Stewart's 2017 book of new and collected poems, and found these truths and their perpetual tensions with one another reverberating throughout the collection. As a composer, I was also drawn in by the poems' abundant musicality – to read them was to hear their lines as melody, and to feel the ebb and flow of rhythmic energy across their forms. Susan graciously permitted me to set five poems which speak to these truths in unique but intersecting ways. Some find profundity in small, vivid moments of everyday life. Some expose the simultaneously creative and destructive results of human action. All link the course and events of human lives to other recurrent cycles of growth and decay, entangling us – and our actions – with day, season, non-human organism, ecosystem, epoch, cosmos. Together, my settings of these five poems respond to the last lines of the final song & poem, also titled Cinder: "Tell me, ravaged singer, / how the cinder bears the seed."

Life is seed and cinder, wonder and regret, hope and despair, and around again. Wherever we each may be on the spiral path through these ever-present dualities, and whatever the journey has cost us, we're still here, and we're going to sing about it.



### III. Piano Music for a Silent Movie

The gossips whisper their reproaches—  
was it my fault I was too young for the war?

A muddy rain spoils every picnic,  
but the fields are thirsty, the farmers are poor.

My talent lies in kissing and pretending,  
and climbing barefoot up a trellis in the dark.

The neighbors are sharpening their pitchforks,  
though no one dares to tell us. In the park

I found her note pinned to a linden,  
her hair-ribbon snagged in a pine

—All the world worries a lover  
when all the world seems like a sign.

I crossed the weedy river  
And floated along to her door.

She promised me a portrait of the roses:  
Forever Pearl, and Malakoff's Tour,

Gloire de Dijon, and Marechal,  
the Souvenir of Malmaison;

I promised her nothing but trouble—  
My être had no raison.

Her hens pecked the grain from my pockets;  
her cat ate the butterfat.

You needed a coupon for coffee, so I  
brought her some cherries in my hat.

She stowed her watercolors in the rowboat—  
I threw my books in the stern;

The oars dripped blue across our shoes  
and we banked in a bed of ferns.

The crazy maid shattered the porch roof  
while the merry-go-round never stopped.

Cannon pounded in the distance  
(or was it thunder?)—every ear felt the pop.

As for us, we were always falling, deeper  
than the tides and the moon,

Deeper than the quarry and the well,  
and the shadows that hide at noon.

All this frenzy set the cocks a-crowing—  
she let me choose a table and a chair,

The olive-wood glowed to embers:  
she let me let down her hair.

"I kissed his ear and his elbow," she sang,  
"and the silky side of his thigh.

I kissed his knees, I kissed his lips  
and then he waved good-bye."

Our little spirit flitted,  
as fast and light as a moth.

"Shameful," they said, "unlawful  
—a troth, in the end, is a troth."

Love is a lapse and lovers liars,  
the father weeps, the mother sighs.

The wagons are circling  
below the bedroom floor.

One laughs too much,  
the other cries.

The honeysuckle lost its honey  
and the hens took their grain indoors.

Frost leveled the ferny banks  
And ice grew thick on the oars.

I saw her face in the water.  
I saw his face in the glass.

Some of us live in the present,  
and some of us live in the past,

But it's the bootblacks marching toward the future  
who trample the summer grass.

The gossips whisper their reproaches—  
was it my fault I was too young for the war?

A muddy rain spoils every picnic,  
but the fields are thirsty, the farmers are poor.

#### **IV. Man Dancing with a Baby**

Before balance, before counting, before  
The record glistens and the needle slides,  
Grating, into the overture, there is the end  
Of weight, the leaning into nothing and then

A caught breath, the record listens, the needle slides  
Over slowly, and all at once around us a woman's voice  
Stretches weightless, leaning into nothing.  
Like a clothesline, the taut chorus: oh, hilarious

Oh baby, all around us, over slowly, a woman's voice  
Gathers above the pick me up, pick me up  
And the desperate put, put me down. First the tightrope,  
Then the light foot, and the taunting chorus

Pick me up, pick me up. Oh, oh baby.  
The slippery floor shimmers and spins like a record while  
The light is swinging footloose on its rope  
Out of time. The shadows

Slip, shimmering black, and spin across the floor,  
Then turn back and pick up again. Oh seedpod stuck for just  
One moment on the cattail, out of time, out of shadows,  
Downy cheek against a beard: oh scratches

On the record, oh baby, oh measure  
Oh strange balance that grips us  
On this side of the world.

#### **V. Cinder**

We needed fire to make  
the tongs and tongs to hold  
us from the flame; we needed  
ash to clean the cloth  
and cloth to clean the ash's  
stain; we needed stars  
to find our way, to make  
the light that blurred the stars;  
we needed death to mark  
an end, an end that time  
in time could mend.  
Born in love, the consequence—  
born of love, the need.  
Tell me, ravaged singer,  
how the cinder bears the seed.

## **Nacht und Träume**

Matthäus von Collin

Heil'ge Nacht, du sinkest nieder;  
Nieder wallen auch die Träume,  
Wie dein Mondlicht durch die Räume,  
Durch der Menschen stille Brust.  
Die belauschen sie mit Lust;  
Rufen, wenn der Tag erwacht:  
Kehre wieder, heil'ge Nacht!  
Holde Träume, kehret wieder!

## **Night and Dreams**

**English Translation © Richard Wigmore**

Holy night, you sink down;  
dreams, too, float down,  
like your moonlight through space,  
through the silent hearts of men.  
They listen with delight,  
crying out when day awakes:  
come back, holy night!  
Fair dreams, return!