

New Music On The Point and Scrag Mountain Music present



## a murmur in the trees

11-12 September 21 • Brandon & Montpelier, Vermont



# PROGRAM (Brandon, VT)

## **a murmur in the trees (2021) WORLD PREMIERE**

for twenty-four double basses

*(performed at 5 pm and repeated at 6 pm)*

### Created by

Eve Beglarian | Robert Black | Matt Sargent

### Double Bass Performers

Andrew Albright	Paul Horak
Robert Black	Benjamin Littenberg
Dara Bloom	Ryan McMasters
Eben Bodach-Turner	Christina Morris
Maisie Bruce	Evan Premo
Emily Byrne	Evan Runyon
Marcia Cassidy	Kyle Saulnier
Rowan Cleary	Grace St Laurent
Caroline Doane	James Sullivan
Christie Echols	Baker Wainscoat
Michael Fay	Ben Wolfgang
Kyle Grimm	Will Yager

### INTERMEZZO

*(performed at 5:30 pm, please follow the chalk to the Fairy Garden)*

Karin Gottshall, poetry

Evan Premo: A Murmur in the Trees – to note (2021) WORLD PREMIERE

Mary Bonhag, soprano

Robert Black and Evan Premo, bass

A second performance of

## **a murmur in the trees**

for twenty-four double basses

follows: you are welcome to stay, as you like.

# PROGRAM (Montpelier, VT)

*(program begins at 11 am)*

## **Prelude**

Karin Gottshall, poetry

Evan Premo: A Murmur in the Trees – to note (2021) WORLD PREMIERE

Mary Bonhag, soprano

Robert Black and Evan Premo, bass

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James Sullivan

Baker Wainscoat

Ben Wolfgang

Will Yager

Project Coordinator: Evan Premo

Project Technical Director: Ryan McMasters

## Program Notes

A Murmur in the Trees is actually the name of four different things. It's an 1862 poem by Emily Dickinson. It's the whole experience you are going to have with us here today. It's a half-hour piece for twenty-four basses by Eve Beglarian, Robert Black, and Matt Sargent. And it's a song setting of the Dickinson poem by Evan Premo.

First, we're thinking you might want to read the poem before you experience the event.

A Murmur in the Trees – to note –  
Not loud enough – for Wind –  
A Star – not far enough to seek –  
Nor near enough – to find –

A long – long Yellow – on the Lawn –  
A Hubbub – as of feet –  
Not audible – as Ours – to Us –  
But dapperer – More Sweet –

A Hurrying Home of little Men  
To Houses unperceived –  
All this – and more – if I should tell –  
Would never be believed –

Of Robins in the Trundle bed  
How many I espy  
Whose Nightgowns could not hide the Wings –  
Although I heard them try –

But then I promised ne'er to tell –  
How could I break My Word?  
So go your Way – and I'll go Mine –  
No fear you'll miss the Road.

Emily Dickinson

Here are some thoughts about the poem from Evan Premo:

*To me, Emily Dickinson, in this curious and beautiful poem, speaks of her artistic inspiration. She can see and hear, in nature, what others can't: murmurs in trees, little fairy men, robins in nightgowns in trundle beds. In essence, she can perceive the Divine/ the Spirit world because she is looking THAT closely! But in the third and final stanzas, she stops her observations short - perhaps she thinks she shared too much, given away too many secrets or was about to (she won't "be believed" anyway). In my setting of this poem*

*for voice and two pizzicato bass players I tried to amplify (so that we mere mortals can hear it) the “hubbub” of feet as little men hurry to their houses, just as Eve amplifies Dickinson’s “Murmur in the Trees” with 24 bass players in the woods.*

And there are a few things we’d like to tell you about the 24-bass piece before you experience it.

The music was created by treating a piece of birch bark as a musical score, where the lines on the birch bark are notes that are read at the rate of one-third inch per minute, which is said to be the speed at which plant signals travel. The y-axis has been mapped to notes in the overtone series, so the basses are playing open strings and up to seven harmonics above each string, creating a palette of 32 possible pitches.

For the first fifteen minutes, the basses are spread out along the path as widely as possible. Wherever you stand in the path, you will hear some basses nearby, and some quite far away. You are welcome to move up and down the path, and where you choose to stand will change what you hear. There is no need to rush all the way to the end of the path. There is time to experience everything.

#### BRANDON VERSION:

After fifteen minutes, the bass players will very gradually move up the path, and you, too, might want to find yourself at the upper end of the path by the end of that following ten minutes. Then, for the last five minutes of the piece, the basses will surround the audience in a circle (or maybe an oval, depending on how many of you there are), and the sound will radiate inward over all of us listening.

#### MONTPELIER VERSION:

After fifteen minutes, the bass players will very gradually move down towards the bottom of the path, and you, too, might want to find yourself at the lower end of the path by the end of that following ten minutes. Then, for the last five minutes of the piece, the basses will surround the audience in a circle (or maybe an oval, depending on how many of you there are), and the sound will radiate inward over all of us listening.

Development of *A Murmur in the Trees* was sponsored by a 2020 grant from the MAP Fund for Eve and Robert to do a project with visual artist Aviva Rahmani and choreographer Yoshiko Chuma, a project that took a different form due to COVID-19. Special thanks also to Isaiah K. Webb, who, on a hike with Eve and Yoshiko last summer, gave Eve the piece of birch bark that became the score of *A Murmur in the Trees*.

## About the Artists

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, composer and performer **Eve Beglarian** is a “humane, idealistic rebel and a musical sensualist.” A 2017 winner of the Alpert Award in the Arts for her “prolific, engaging and surprising body of work,” she has also been awarded the 2015 Robert Rauschenberg Prize from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts for her “innovation, risk-taking, and experimentation.” Beglarian’s current and recent projects include a collaboration with writer/performer Karen Kandel and writer/director Mallory Catlett about women in Vicksburg from the Civil War to the present, a piece about the controversial Balthus painting *Thérèse Dreaming* for vocalist Lucy Dhegrae, and a duo for uilleann pipes and organ that was premiered by Renée Louprette and Ivan Goff at Disney Hall as part of the Los Angeles Philharmonic’s 100th anniversary celebrations. Since 2001, she has been creating *A Book of Days*, “a grand and gradually manifesting work in progress...an eclectic and wide-open series of enticements.” (*Los Angeles Times*) Recordings of Beglarian’s music are available on ECM, Koch, New World, Cantaloupe, Innova, Naxos, Kill Rock Stars, Azika, New Focus, CDBaby, and Bandcamp. [www.evbvd.com](http://www.evbvd.com)

**Robert Black** tours the world creating unheard of music for the double bass, collaborating with the most adventurous composers, musicians, dancers, artists, actors, and technophiles from all walks of life. He is a founding and current member of the Bang on a Can All-Stars. Current projects include *First Fridays with Robert Black* – a monthly series of streamed solo bass recitals, a 10-channel audio/video double bass installation reflecting on the Anthropocene with sound artists Brian House and Sue Huang, filmed at the Freshkills landfill in NYC, and commissions from Carman Moore, Joan Tower, Nick Dunston, Žibuolkė Martinaitytė, Krists Auznieks, Jakhongir Shukurov, and Daniel Sabzghabaei. Solo recordings include *Philip Glass-Bass Partita and Poetry* (Orange Mountain Music), *Possessed* (Cantaloupe Records) *Modern American Bass* (New World Records), *The Bass Music of Christian Wolff* and *Giacinto Scelsi* (Mode Records), and *State of the Bass* (O.O. Discs). [www.robertblack.org](http://www.robertblack.org)

**Matt Sargent** is a composer, guitarist, and music technologist based in upstate New York. His work grows from interests in resonance and recursive systems, computer models of intelligence, and the making/breaking of long-form patterns. His compositions have been described as “bringing a sharpened sense of the transcendental into the 21st century.” (Paul Muller, *Sequenza21*) On his 2018 album, *Ghost Music*, Bill Meyer writes, “this music isn’t about following in anyone’s footsteps; it uses bare resources to establish a bounded and essential place.” (*The Wire*) His albums include *Separation Songs* (Cold Blue Music), *Tide (for ten basses)* (Marginal Frequency), and *Ghost Music* (Weighter Recordings). In demand as an audio engineer for contemporary and experimental music, Sargent recently recorded Alvin Lucier’s *Ricochet Lady* (Black Truffle), Sarah Hennies’s *Spectral Malsconcities* (New World Records), David Felder’s *Les Quatre Temps Cardinaux* (Coviello Contemporary), and

Paul Catanese's *Century of Progress / Sleep*, among others. Praising his work on Robert Carl's album, *Splectra* (Cold Blue Music), *Fanfare Magazine* writes, "he could find no better collaborator than composer and sound designer Matt Sargent." Sargent is a visiting assistant professor of music at Bard College. [mattsargentmusic.com](http://mattsargentmusic.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. [www.evanpremo.com](http://www.evanpremo.com)

**Karin Gottshall** lives in East Middlebury and teaches Creative Writing at Middlebury College. She has published two full-length books of poetry, the most recent of which is *The River Won't Hold You*, and three limited edition chapbooks with small independent presses. Her poems have appeared in literary journals such as *The Kenyon Review*, *The Colorado Review*, *Crazyhorse*, and *FIELD*. She is Director of the New England Young Writers' Conference at Bread Loaf.

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)

#### **About New Music On The Point:**

Now in its eleventh season, New Music On The Point is a two week-long summer festival where aspiring musicians explore contemporary music in a glorious setting on the shores of Lake Dunmore. Each June, 50 participants from around the world engage in collaborative music-making through an intensive schedule of rehearsals, seminars, workshops, and concerts. The festival culminates with premieres of new chamber works by each of the participating composers. In addition to nightly concerts on the rustic lakeside campus, there is a series of community concerts in various venues around Central Vermont that features NMOP's internationally renowned instrumentalists and vocalists in diverse programs of new music seldom performed in the area.

Amy Williams, Artistic Director  
Jenny Beck, Executive Director  
Kerrith Livengood, Assistant Director

#### **About Scrag Mountain Music:**

Scrag Mountain Music, based in Marshfield, is led by co-Artistic Directors Mary Bonhag (soprano) and Evan Premo (double bass/composer). Scrag Mountain Music's mission is to connect communities in Vermont to classical music in a powerful way by presenting innovative, interactive, and affordable programs of top-tier chamber music. Six to eight times a season, Scrag invites guest artists to participate in carefully curated week-long artistic residencies in Vermont, comprising rehearsals, community engagement programs, and public performances. For details: [www.scragmountainmusic.org](http://www.scragmountainmusic.org)

Mary Bonhag and Evan Premo, Founders and Co-Artistic Directors  
Lara Mones, Managing Director



New Music on the Point gives special thanks to the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Brandon Historical Society, Celebration Rentals, Brandon Town Hall Theater, Courtney & Devon Fuller, Brandon Area Chamber of Commerce, The Town of Brandon Select Board, Chef Steve Lanphere, Ryan McMasters, and Will Yager. We are very grateful to individual donors and the following organizations for their support, including The Patrick Foundation and:



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

We are grateful to all our donors!

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