



# BANG ON A CAN ALL-STARS & CONTEMPORANEOUS DAVID BLOOM, CONDUCTOR

# AFTER THE TREEWATCHER

VICKY CHOW – PIANO

DAVID COSSIN, MATT EVANS, AMY GARAPIC – PERCUSSION

TAYLOR LEVINE – ELECTRIC GUITAR

TODD REYNOLDS, KATE DREYFUSS – VIOLIN

SCOT MOORE – VIOLA

ASHLEY BATHGATE, DYLAN MATTINGLY – CELLO

ROBERT BLACK – CONTRABASS

# CAPRICCIO ON THE DEPARTURE OF A BELOVED BROTHER

FANNY WYRICK-FLAX – PICCOLO
ISABEL GLEICHER – FLUTE
VICENTE ALEXIM – CLARINET
KRISTINA TEUSCHLER – BASS CLARINET
KEN THOMSON – SAXOPHONE
BERT HILL – HORN
OSSIN MATT EVANS AMY GARAPIC – PER

DAVID COSSIN, MATT EVANS, AMY GARAPIC – PERCUSSION VICKY CHOW, MIKAEL DARMANIE – KEYBOARD TAYLOR LEVINE – ELECTRIC GUITAR ROBERT BLACK – ELECTRIC BASS TODD REYNOLDS, KATE DREYFUSS – VIOLIN ASHLEY BATHGATE, DYLAN MATTINGLY – CELLO

### THE PASSION

MOLLY NETTER, LUCY DHEGRAE, PHILIPPA THOMPSON – VOICE FANNY WYRICK-FLAX – PICCOLO

ISABEL GLEICHER - FLUTE

VICENTE ALEXIM – CLARINET

KRISTINA TEUSCHLER – BASS CLARINET

KEN THOMSON – SAXOPHONE

BERT HILL - HORN

DAVID COSSIN, MATT EVANS, AMY GARAPIC, ADAM HOLMES - PERCUSSION ZACHARY DETRICK, CHARLES VAN TASSEL. JOHN WALLAR - SLEIGH BELLS

VICKY CHOW - PIANO

MIKAEL DARMANIE - KEYBOARD

TAYLOR LEVINE - ELECTRIC GUITAR

ROBERT BLACK – ELECTRIC BASS

TODD REYNOLDS, FINNEGAN SHANAHAN - VIOLIN

SCOT MOORE - VIOLA

ASHLEY BATHGATE, DYLAN MATTINGLY - CELLO

Produced by DAMIAN LEGASSICK

Recorded by DAMIAN LEGASSICK at the Power Station at Berklee NYC, May 2018

Assisted by BRETT MAYER

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Editing, mixing and mastering by DAMIAN LEGASSICK

t was a sunny afternoon in 2012, and I was sitting on my front porch thinking about what kind of piece I should write next. I gave myself a blank slate, no limits as far as the size of the ensemble or the length of the piece, or any other practical considerations. I started a list. I thought about the music I had written and about music by other composers, and all the pieces that had a profound emotional, intellectual or physical effect on me—pieces that gave me chills or made my eyes water, made my hair stand on end, feel invincible or vulnerable or both at the same time. The pieces that had changed my life.

One of these pieces for me was Michael Gordon's *The Treewatcher*. He composed it in the early '80s when we were both students at Yale School of Music. It was programmed on the first composer's concert that I attended during my first semester at Yale. I had just moved to New Haven from Minnesota, and I was feeling more than a little intimidated being surrounded by so much talent. Even though I was very serious about being a composer, I had not heard very much new music. I certainly had never heard anything like Michael's piece.

It was written for a solo rock organ, which Michael had turbo-charged in some way and played himself. The music consisted of a finger pattern that cycled for almost the entire duration of the piece. You got all the pitches in the first ten seconds. It was loud and hypnotic. It did only one thing, just the finger pattern. Then, after seven or eight minutes, the keyboard stopped and another student, David Lang, walked out on stage and hit a hotel service bell, just steady eighth notes, for about twenty seconds. When the piece was over, the first thing you heard were loud boos coming from the more conservative faculty members. Then the composers all started cheering. Boos, cheers, shouting insults—I couldn't believe it. I had never been to a concert like this. (I was definitely not in Minnesota anymore.)

Thinking about my first Yale Composer's Concert, and setting aside the near-riot conditions, I wondered about writing something new in 2013 that would have a similar introspective, nearly trance-inducing effect that Michael's piece had achieved 30 years earlier. I had the idea to make a piece where I gradually changed *The Treewatcher* from a Michael Gordon piece into a Brooks piece, with my piece being more composed, but maintaining the original hypnotic quality of Michael's piece. It wouldn't be totally static. It would change very slowly and steadily. Before I started writing,



I wanted to run the idea past Michael to make sure he was okay with it, and he thought it was fantastic. I asked him to send me a score, and a recording if he had one. But he declined, saying that he thought it would be more interesting for me to work from my memory of his piece. We would try out the new piece in North Adams, Massachusetts at Bang on a Can's Summer Music Festival.

At the 2013 festival, Michael heard the piece for the first time. In a nod to the original, the piece ends with David Lang hitting a hotel bell for 20 seconds, but other than that it sounded nothing like the original *Treewatcher*. There were no conservative faculty members to boo my piece. In fact the response from the audience was overwhelming. We decided then that *After the Treewatcher* would be the first in a trilogy of pieces for amplified chamber orchestra to be performed at the festival, and then recorded for Cantaloupe.

I started work on the next piece right away. I hadn't gotten far when I got the news: the British composer, Steve Martland, had died suddenly, unexpectedly. He just died. I was devastated. I met Steve at Tanglewood when we were both composer fellows there in 1984. I met my wife, the composer Maura Bosch there as well. It was an intense and emotional summer. Steve overstayed his visa and moved to New York with us after Tanglewood, and was the best man at our wedding. (He was a former student and friend of the Dutch composer Louis Andriessen. Steve arranged for performances of my work in the Netherlands and introduced me there.)

Upon learning of Steve's death, the work I had done so far went out the window. This piece had to be about the tragic loss of this wonderful spirit. For comfort, I turned to the keyboard music of Bach, *Capriccio on the Departure of a Beloved Brother*. It was a very personal piece for Bach, written during his own period of grief and loss.

Things came together quickly. The piece starts with an old vinyl recording of the actual Bach piece, invoking memory, nostalgia, the audio equivalent of faded photos and old newspaper clippings. This music is overwhelmed by waves of guitar feedback and drums, and finally cross-fades into my own opening texture. At the two-minute mark, the band is firing on all cylinders and they've got the "sound" that I was searching for. It's a sound world that invites you to stay and let it wash over you. The piece has prominent roles for electric guitar, bass and drum set, with instructions to be played loud, reflecting Steve's love of rock music and dance clubs.

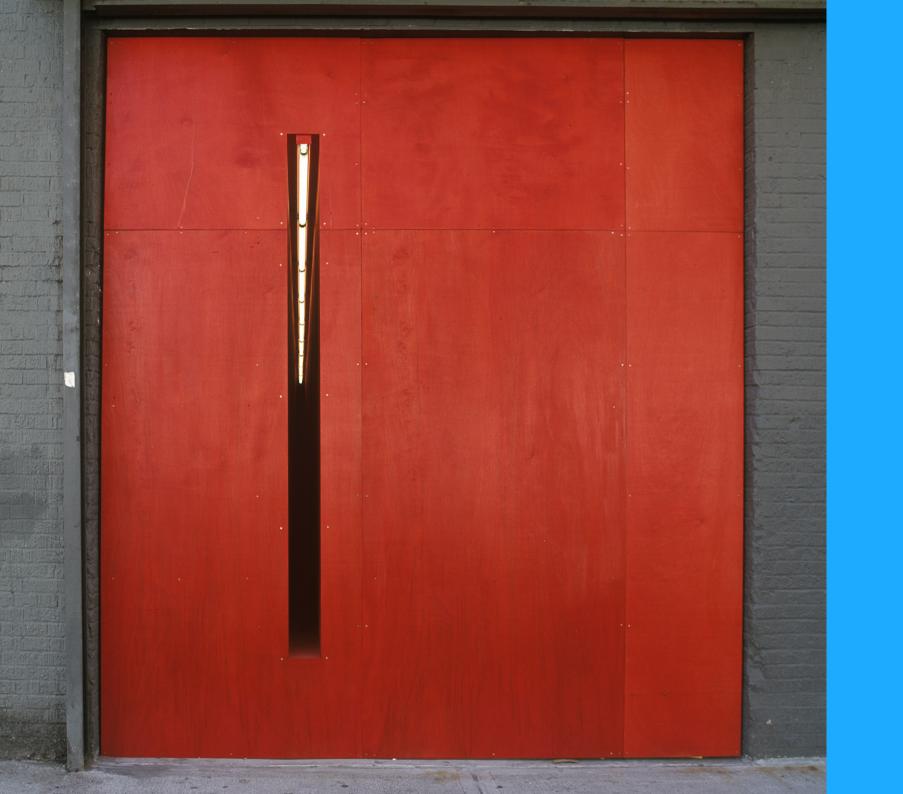


The last piece in the trilogy is by far the largest and longest. I had it in the back of my mind to write a Passion for a long time, but I was no longer interested in telling the traditional Passion story found at the end of the four gospels. All Passions are spiritual pieces that focus on suffering, but I wanted to tell the story of the suffering of everyday people that goes on all around us, all the time. The terminally ill, the parent who had to give up on their own dreams, victims of mental illness, exploited and undocumented workers—these are the people that are honored in *The Passion*.

All the people mentioned in this piece are real people. The second movement text by L.A. journalist Jefferson Reid is taken from a project that he did "shadowing" some of these unfortunate members of society. It describes an undocumented worker with a leg that won't heal, and a mentally ill woman who can't stop hoarding. Biblical texts are also interspersed. The text is spoken rather than sung, and is recited simultaneously in three languages, creating the kind of disorientation that you feel at international airport trying to understand the information coming through the public address system.

The text for the third movement was written by my sister, Claudia Brooks Lindberg. It's taken from a pamphlet she made while dying of cancer. She knew she would not be there for her four children, and wrote down her advice in a pamphlet called "instructions for living." Her text includes mundane advice such as "see your dentist twice a year" and "never buy a home with a tuck-under garage" and "never leave your drink unattended at a party," but it also contains more spiritual reminders. *The Passion* ends with the following advice: "You are loved. You are wanted. Call home often."

# Jeffrey Brooks, Winter 2018



### THE PASSION

II.

Text adapted from the writing of Jefferson Reid

attention all passengers attention do not weep for me weep for yourselves and for your children the meek and the barren acquainted with grief the thirst and the hunger the Passion

the alarm clock set stabs too soon five seventeen AM nodding off into the same bad dream the slow motion avalanche

the bad leg drags the worse leg down icy stairs out the door transfigured white the frosty shimmer of acorns pale blue a foreigner
despised and invisible
waits in summer clothes
for the twenty-one G
hail Mary full of grace
it's minus twelve at the airport
the news is next
the Passion

arise in blessed rubble spreading like a spilled can of paint kicked over and forgotten things, things, so many things and never the right ones

we looked for peace —
pierced daughters and tattooed
sons
but no good came —
consumed with zeal for your home
and for a time of health —
death hands off to life
a dead man's home resurrected

mothers of dread a darker shade of twilight and behold: mourning the dying and the dead Trouble a terrible salvation washes it all away the flood, the flood a torrent of emotion cuts a canyon through life weep for yourselves and for your children if they do this when the wood is green. what will they do when it is dry? The Passion

### III.

Text adapted from the writing of Claudia Lindberg (addressed to her children during the final stages of her terminal illness)

You can do any job you want to do
You can pass any class you need
Use study time efficiently with study skill guides
If you have a problem don't take too long to get some help
Read for fun

Think first, then act
Obey the law
Take preventive measures that will keep you safe
Never leave your beverage unattended at a party
Always get your own drink, don't accept one from
someone else

Be a friend to your spouse and show your love with words and actions
Cook as a family
Include your kids in work and play

Get a tetanus diptheria shot every ten years Get your teeth checked and cleaned twice a year Get regular physicals Get exercise Balance your checkbook monthly
Save ten percent
Give ten percent
Make a budget
Never buy a house with a tuck under garage
Use credit cards for your convenience, not for credit

You are loved You are wanted You are special

Call home often Call home often



Thank you: Contemporaneous, Bang on a Can All-Stars, Richard Lindberg, David Bloom, Maura Bosch, Andrew Cotton, Adam Holmes, Ian Kagey and the Power Station/Berklee NYC, Christina Jensen, Sruly Lazaros, Brad Lubman, Mass MoCA, Brett Mayer, Tim Thomas, Philippa Thompson.

Thelma Hunter has been a supporter of my work since the early '90s, when she presented the regional premiere of my piece for two pianos. When support was needed for this project, she enthusiastically stepped in and, through her foundation, underwrote the commissioning. She attended the premieres of the first two pieces in North Adams, MA and spoke with me about plans for the third and largest piece, *The Passion*. Unfortunately, Thelma died a few weeks after attending the premiere of *Capriccio on the Departure of a Beloved Brother* at the age of 92. This CD is dedicated to her memory.

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