

## **Hans Tutschku Portrait Concert**

**A Farewell Celebration with performances by  
Tony Arnold, Amy Advocat, Ethan Chaves, Jack  
Yarbrough and Elizabeth England**



Thursday, November 13, 2025, 7:30 PM

Goethe-Institut Boston | Presented in cooperation  
with the Department of Music at Harvard  
University



## **Concert Program**

### **Einst mit dir**

for soprano, clarinet, violin and live-electronics

2007, 13:00 min

upon the poem "Fenster wo ich einst mit dir" by Stefan George

### **sparks**

for piano and 8-ch live-electronics

2021, 17:00 min

### **Still Air 3**

for oboe, bass clarinet and electronics

2014, 11:30 min

### **voice-unrooted**

for soprano and electronics

2016, 18:00 min

Dedicated to: Tony Arnold

### **Performed by:**

Tony Arnold – soprano

Amy Advocat – clarinet & bass clarinet

Ethan Anthony Chaves – violin

Elizabeth England – oboe

Hans Tutschku – live-electronics

Jack Yarbough – piano

Isaac Blumfield, Jelani Surpris – sound

Seth Torres – technical director

Program notes by Victor Arul

## Program Notes

### Einst mit dir (2007)

Many of Tutschku's works from the 1990s and early 2000s may be perceived as charting a distinct aesthetic sphere, marked by an engagement with poetry that transcends the perfunctory task of text-setting. This engagement appears to function as a search for a profound conceptual consonance. Such an alignment is particularly palpable in Tutschku's works informed by the poet Karl Lubomirski, as in *Freibrief für einen Traum* (1995) and *rapprochement-éloignement* (1996). In these pieces, Tutschku's work absorbs the poetry's hermetical mode of expression, adopting its refusal of didactic presentation to achieve a heightened, unmediated emotional resonance. This same hermetic principle is arguably manifest with equal force across his non-text-based works of the period: from the elusive, fragmented rendering of field recordings in *extrémités lointaines* (1998) to the manner in which the solo percussion piece *The Metal Voice* (1992) extrapolates an entire electronic universe from a small melody, which is only presented in fragments, and a set of five chords.

This lineage of poetic engagement, culminating in the multi-layered music theater project on Georg Trakl, *Die Süsse unserer traurigen Kindheit* (2005), provides the immediate aesthetic context for *Einst mit dir*. The central body of the piece begins on a principle of abrupt, harsh eruptions. The setting of the text itself is severe, favoring an almost percussive, declamatory urgency over traditional lyricism. This relentless drive is realized in two

conflicting, alternating states. The first is a proliferation of highly florid, intricate textures, protruding composite rhythms of unceasing agitation. This frenetic activity then comes to sudden arrests, colliding with moments of complete, stark standstill.

These caesuras, however, offer no repose. They are not moments of rest but in fact the opposite: extreme, amplified tension, built on sustained, held notes that serve only to intensify the psychological drama. The surrounding silences, rather than providing relief, only underscore the pervasive sense of urgency. Here, the music thus exists in a state of heightened, breathless energy, one that never truly tires or resolves.

This tension, embodying the journey's initial state of anger, is exemplified in specific moments of what might be termed a frenetic, unstable homophony. In one such passage, the soprano and clarinet are locked in a shared contour, performing nervous, matched glissandi initialized from the same pitch. Their unified agitation is seized by the violin, which extrapolates this melodic shape, magnifying it into a far more erratic and exaggerated gesture.

This state of agitation eventually transforms into the "profound restlessness" of the work's emotional midpoint. This is embodied through a different, more static profile of homophony: the ensemble congeals into long, sustained tones, from which a single voice will attempt to move, yet no melodic trajectory is ever permitted to find a satisfying resolution. The line is left suspended, heightening the sense of unresolved searching of something which is craved. The calm is then discovered

through an attitude of non-resolution, where the ensemble finds solace in similar sustained tones to rediscover the vista which they originally emerged from, the soprano's breaths, but now with a newfound slowness and softness unveiled from their recently traversed tribulations.

This intricate, volatile design makes the work a formidable exploration that demands a unique level of interpretive cohesion. This very quality was noted at its premiere, which took place at Sanders Theatre, Cambridge, MA, on December 17, 2007, following its development at the Harvard University Studio for Electroacoustic Composition. On that occasion, soprano Jennifer Ashe, violinist Gabby Diaz, and clarinetist Michael Norsworthy fully embodied this challenge. As David Patterson observed in the *Boston Musical Intelligencer*, the performers demonstrated a "complete involvement and thorough connection" to the work's exploratory nature. It is precisely this shared, unflinching navigation of the work's inner landscape, from its initial anger through its deep restlessness, that imbues the final, quiet return to breath with its ultimate sense of a profound, and deeply earned, peace.

### **sparks (2007)**

The title offers a precise metaphor for the generative friction at this work's core: a kinetic discharge between two bodies, the piano and the electronics, which have long formed a central, evolving axis of Tutschku's creative investigation. This 17-minute composition for piano and

8-channel live-electronics is not an isolated gesture but a culmination of a three-decade-long intellectual project concerning electronics and piano, one that has consistently sought to redefine this volatile relationship.

This lineage has been one of increasing dynamic integration. It progressed from the analytic, reactive model of *Das Bleierne Klavier* (1999), where instrumental gestures triggered defined electronic responses, to the fused-system concept of *Zellen-Linien* (2007), which re-imagined the setup as an "electronically prepared piano." This dynamic was further developed in *Shadow of bells* (2014), where the electronics became an interactive acoustic space, and later in *virtual bodies* (2017), a work that programmatically sought to destabilize and continuously reevaluate definitions of action and reaction.

*Sparks* thus inherits a specific, fundamental challenge: to dismantle the default perceptual hierarchy where the piano is heard as a familiar, "known entity" or source, and the electronics are relegated to the status of an "unknown entity," a technological shadow or mere *aftermath*. The work, developed at the Harvard University Studio for Electroacoustic Composition, is a direct intervention in this one-way dynamic.

The work was premiered by pianist Mark Knoop at the Dialogues Festival on July 9, 2021. This was at the second dedicated FluCoMa (Fluid Corpus Manipulation) concert. FluCoMa was at the time, a newly released, powerful machine listening and learning toolkit which opened doors for the construction of Tutschku's work and, for this piece, this modish technology facilitates a truly

reciprocal, two-way dialogue. The live piano signal is analyzed in real-time for its acoustic features, allowing the system to react instantaneously. But crucially, the electronic part is also imbued with its own agency. It operates as a hybrid of instantaneous response and pre-composed phrases drawn from the corpus. This structural independence allows the electronics to *propose* new materials, introducing thematic ideas *before* they appear in the instrumental part. The "unknown entity" thus becomes a progenitor, capable of leading the discourse and compelling the "known entity" to follow.

The audible result is a near-perfect sonic merger. From the outset of the piece, neither force dominates; they coalesce into a single, expanded meta-instrument. The acoustic possibilities of the piano are radically widened, pushing it toward the physically impossible. The electronics perform a real-time micro-structural analysis of the sound, "decomposing" it and using the corpus to unmoor individual partials into fluid glissandi, or scattering retrieved gestural fragments across the immersive eight-channel field.

Within this intricate system, the pianist is not a simple operator but an active co-creator, afforded specific windows of elastic time, or "pockets of freedom," to actively shape the musical discourse. This delicate balance, a synthesis of human interpretive agency and advanced technological potential, allows the entire work to navigate its complex journey, moving through moments of delicate suspension, dense percussive explosions, and rich harmonic fabrics with a sense of seamless, natural, and inevitable flow.

### **Still Air 3 (2014)**

This work proposes a deliberate aesthetic renunciation, a conscious turning-away from the sonic paradigms that define many of Tutschku's other works. It is a piece which departs from the attitude found in *Klaviersammlung* (2011), an electroacoustic composition which builds a vigorous architecture from the relentless modulation of both harmony and rates of percussiveness. The *Still Air* cycle likewise eschews the abstract, dialectical structure of *clin d'oreille d'Avignon* (2012), which operates through the stark juxtaposition of bare speech against sections of dense, sometimes abrasive, sound.

*Still Air 3*, in contrast, seeks its voice elsewhere. This 11-minute, 30-second composition embarks on an interrogation of restraint itself, seeking a profound expression not in overt action but in the latent potential of minimal activity and the subtle inflections of finely shaded nuance in a series of multiphonics and electronics.

It stands as the synthetic apex of a triptych for wind instruments and electronics, a cycle conceived as an inquiry into the delicate, intricate sonorities of quiet sounds. While *Still Air 1* and *Still Air 2* were soloistic explorations for bass clarinet and oboe respectively, this work unites them, weaving their voices into a subtle, intimate dialogue. The entire system was developed at the Harvard University studios, receiving its premiere on March 1, 2014, by the Fromm Players at Harvard Festival.

The work's technological mechanism employs the microphone signal in a manner that is integral to its conceptual design. The electronic environment is



bifurcated, comprising two distinct strata of pre-composed sound. The first stratum functions as an autonomous acoustic horizon, a fixed tape component that unfolds with complete independence from the performers' immediate actions.

The second stratum, in profound contrast, is entirely latent. Its very existence is contingent upon the performers' breath, animated *only* through the continuous analysis of the live instruments' amplitude. This necessitates that the bass clarinetist and oboist play with proximity and precision into their respective microphones; should their breath cease, this entire layer of sound vanishes into silence.

The ingenuity of this system lies in its conceptual model, which virtualizes a specific, organic phenomenon inherent to wind performance. Tutschku observes that a crescendoing multiphonic does not merely increase in volume; it simultaneously enriches its own spectrum, generating a bloom of higher partials that corresponds with a subtle ascent in pitch.

This precise physical behavior is adopted as a control structure. The tracked dynamics of the live performers are mapped to continuously modulate *both* the intensity and the pitch of the hidden secondary sound layer. This process engenders a powerful psychoacoustic illusion, one that mimics a perfectly synchronized live treatment. The resultant electronic sound is thus not perceived as an accompaniment, but as a spectral shadow or a resonant double. It is a sound that traces the performer's most minute interpretive decisions with absolute fidelity,

forging an inseparable gestural bond between the human breath and its virtual, electronic counterpart.

### **voice-unrooted (2016)**

For most of our daily lives, the voice is a vessel. It is a familiar, almost perfunctory tool, so obliged to the task of communication that we rarely hear the voice *itself*, only the language it carries. We listen *through* it, not *to* it. *voice-unrooted* asserts a radical aesthetic premise: what remains when this function is stripped away? What elemental drama is waiting in the sounds that lie beneath meaning?

This 16-minute composition for soprano and electronics is that very exploration. It is a phenomenological dismantling of utterance, an attempt to liberate the syllable from its semantic obligations. It seeks to "un-root" the phoneme from its origins to explore its immanent acoustic characteristics: its texture, its weight, its indivisible energy. Composed at the Harvard University Studios for Electroacoustic Composition, the work was written for its dedicatee, soprano Tony Arnold, who provided its inaugural performance on December 15, 2016, within the Hydra concert series at John Knowles Paine Hall.

The piece extends an aesthetic inquiry from Tutschku's earlier *Entwurzelt* (2012), but it also belongs to a constellation of recent works for soloist with electronics. His *Shadow of Bells* (2014) and *pressure-divided* (2015), each only slightly longer in duration than *voice-unrooted*, share a preoccupation: the articulation of "musical shapes

as dramatic gestures." In *Shadow of Bells*, this drama emerges as a relationship between a body and its dynamic atmosphere; in *pressure-divided*, it is the struggle to perceive structure against a tide of contrasting interruptions.

*voice-unrooted* synthesizes these concerns. The drama is conceived as a volatile, existential dialectic between the live soprano and their electronic other. The electronics are not a static backdrop but a mutable, animate architecture. They serve to extend the soprano's expression, enrich harmonic structures, shape intricate sound textures, and occasionally introduce unexpected, alien elements. One might perceive this relationship unfolding across a series of relational tableaux.

At one juncture, a state of **symbiosis** emerges. The electronics generate a delicate, liminal substrate of processed whispers and pitched inhalations. This resonant mist enmeshes the soprano's own rapid, complex articulations, their precisely controlled flurries of phonemes and breaths. The listener is confronted with a single, symbiotic respiratory system, where the boundary between the internal (the body) and the external (the acoustic space) becomes permeable.

This symbiosis dissolves into **discourse**. The electronics re-form as a fractured choir of granulated vocal detritus, articulating an incisive, atomized counterpoint. This percussive, shattered rhythm is set against the soprano's high, seemingly immutable melodic line, forging a potent tension between the fragmented and the fluid, the mechanical and the visceral.

Finally, the dialectic becomes one of **resistance**. The electronic chorus eventually congeals into a single voice – an implacable, obsessive tone, configuring itself into various dyads. A sustained vocal F-sharp manifests in the electronics as a fixed point of sonic memory, an anchor holding with gravitational force. Against this static object, the live soprano strives; their line struggles to pivot, to modulate towards a new harmonic territory, yet finds itself constantly tethered to this unyielding electronic presence.

Through these shifting states, the voice and electronics ultimately fuse into a conjectural, hybridized entity. The human voice becomes the progenitor of acoustic ‘impossibilities’: ephemeral breaths strike with the resonance of gongs; a single larynx appears to splinter into polyphonic glissandi. This fictional sonic landscape dismantles our quotidian perceptual habits, compelling us to ask what new, emergent forms of meaning might arise from a sound-world that is radically pre-linguistic, opening a door to imagine a new world of semanticism.

This conceptual process of “un-rooting” seems to find a potent analogy in Tutschku’s own biographical trajectory. This view is supported by two key aspects of his practice. First, his notable linguistic versatility, marked by deep engagement with languages including English, French, German, Spanish, Japanese, and Portuguese, points to an existence that traverses singular cultural boundaries. Second, Tutschku has cultivated a decades-long practice of sonic collection, amassing a personal archive of field recordings captured in widely disparate contexts. While any single sound, in its native environment, might possess

a logical and self-evident meaning, a fundamental transformation occurs when these acoustic fragments are internalized. Once absorbed and embodied by a single consciousness, they are necessarily re-contextualized. In this process, they reconfigure from their specific origins to form a new, synthetic totality: an intense phenomenal constellation of memory.

This piece, then, may be heard as an articulation of this internal temperament. It is an exploration of a consciousness wherein countless "unrooted" sounds and linguistic fragments coexist. In this light, *voice-unrooted* becomes an act of unveiling, exposing the alien, the incomprehensible, and the profoundly new that lies dormant within the most familiar of all human instruments.

## Bios

**Hans Tutschku** is a composer of instrumental and electroacoustic music. In 1982 he joined the Ensemble für intuitive Musik Weimar and later studied theatre and composition in Berlin, Dresden, The Hague, Paris, and Birmingham. He collaborated in film, theatre, and dance productions, and participated in concert cycles with Karlheinz Stockhausen. Since 2004 he directs the electroacoustic studios at Harvard University.

Improvisation with electronics has been a core activity over the past 35 years. He is the winner of several international competitions, among others: Hanns Eisler Prize, Bourges, CIMESP São Paulo, Prix Ars Electronica, Prix Noroit, Prix Musica Nova, ZKM Giga-Hertz, CIME ICEM, and Klang!. In 2005 he received the Culture Prize of the City of Weimar.

Besides his regular courses at the university, he has taught international workshops for musicians and non-musicians on aspects of art appreciation, listening, creativity, composition, improvisation, live-electronics, and sound spatialization in more than 20 countries.

Celebrated as a “luminary in the world of chamber music and art song” (Huffington Post), soprano **Tony Arnold** internationally acclaimed as a leading proponent of contemporary music in concert and recording, having premiered hundreds of works by established and emerging composers. Her unique blend of vocal virtuosity and communicative warmth, combined with wide-ranging skills in education and leadership were recognized with

the 2015 Brandeis Creative Arts Award. Ms. Arnold is a member of the International Contemporary Ensemble, and enjoys regular guest appearances with leading ensembles and presenters worldwide. With more than thirty discs to her credit, Ms. Arnold has recorded a broad segment of the modern vocal repertory with esteemed chamber music colleagues. She received a Grammy nomination for her recording of George Crumb's iconic *Ancient Voices of Children* (Bridge). Ms. Arnold is a first-prize laureate of the Gaudeamus International and the Louise D. McMahon competitions. She is on the faculty of the Tanglewood Music Center, and leads the innovative Opera Etudes program at the Peabody Conservatory, where she also teaches voice.

Sought out for her “dazzling” (Boston Globe) performances with “extreme control and beauty” (The Clarinet Journal), **Amy Advocat**, clarinetist, is an avid performer of new music having performed with Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Alarm Will Sound, Sound Icon, Guerilla Opera, Firebird Ensemble, Callithumpian Consort, Collage New Music, and Dinosaur Annex.

Amy is a founding member of the bass clarinet and marimba duo, Transient Canvas, with whom she has commissioned and premiered hundreds of new works and released three albums to critical acclaim. Transient Canvas regularly tours across the United States and Europe, including featured performances at New Music Gathering (San Francisco/Boston), SoundNOW Festival (Atlanta), Alba Music Festival (Italy), Music on the Edge (Pittsburgh), Outpost Concert Series (Los Angeles), and

more. Their debut album, *Sift*, was released in August 2017 on New Focus Recordings to rave reviews. KLANG New Music called it "one of the more refreshing things I've heard in recent years." Their second album, *Wired*, was named a top local album of 2018 by The Boston Globe with I Care If You Listen raving "Transient Canvas is a tour de force and this record is a must-add to any new music lover's library."

Equally at home with more traditional classical music, Amy Advocat has also performed with Odyssey Opera, Boston Pops, Harrisburg Symphony, Opera Boston, Boston Philharmonic, and the Virginia Symphony Orchestra. She was twice a fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center and has participated at the New Hampshire Music Festival, Monadnock Music, Summer Institute for Contemporary Performance Practice (SICPP), New York String Orchestra Seminar, Virginia Arts Festival, Spoleto USA Festival, and the American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz, Austria.

Amy Advocat is a proud endorsing artist with Conn-Selmer and Henri Selmer Paris Clarinets.

**Ethan Anthony Cavanac**, violin, is a composer, improviser, and performer and Artistic Director of Lowell House Opera. His music has been performed internationally, with recent premieres by the MIVOS Quartet, Parker Quartet, Harvard Choruses, and Bach Society Orchestra, where he also appeared as soloist. He has attended the Darmstadt Ferienkurse and Valencia International Music Festival, and received the Robert Levin Prize, Blodgett Chamber Music Award, and the



Gardner Prize from the American Viola Society. Cavanac is pursuing an AB in Philosophy and Music at Harvard and co-founded the Senza Sordino Foundation supporting music programs for the verbally disabled.

**Elizabeth England**, oboe, is an in demand performer and teacher in New England and beyond. She has been a member of the Boston Ballet Orchestra since 2016, and regularly performs with many of the area's finest ensembles. Recent engagements include the Boston Symphony, Boston Pops, and Emmanuel Music. Always keen to empower the next generation of oboists, Ms. England serves on the faculty at New England Conservatory Preparatory School, Brandeis University, Boston University Tanglewood Institute, and Wellesley Public Schools. She has given masterclasses at University of Miami's Frost School of Music and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Originally from Edina, Minnesota, Ms. England holds a Bachelor of Music degree from New England Conservatory where she studied with Mark McEwen.

**Jack Yarbrough** is a pianist active in contemporary and experimental music. Focused on the solo piano recital as a medium for temporal and perceptual expansion, he has commissioned several large-scale works aimed at reevaluating the instrument in an era of increasing cultural irrelevance. His idiosyncratic programming and collaborations explore the rich minutiae of touch, resonance, and decay. In the words of Alex Ross,

“Yarbrough’s piano seems less a physical machine than a zone of resonance.”

He has worked closely with composers such as Timothy McCormack, Bunita Marcus, Richard Barrett, Linda Catlin Smith, Marti Epstein, and Makiko Nishikaze. As a chamber musician, he has performed with ensembles including Ensemble intercontemporain, Yarn/Wire, and Ensemble X. His work has been featured in publications and blogs such as *The New Yorker*, *Night After Night*, *Boring Like a Drill*, and *MusicWeb International*.

Originally from outside Birmingham, Alabama, Jack now lives in Ithaca, New York, where he is a Sage Fellow at Cornell University, completing a Doctorate of Musical Arts in performance practice. His teachers include Stephen Drury, Xak Bjerken, and Michael Kirkendoll. His recordings appear on Another Timbre and Sawyer Editions.

## **Upcoming concerts in November @ Goethe-Institut Boston**

### **Lydian String Quartet presents Beethoven+**

Concert I | String quartets by Ludwig van Beethoven on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of his death in 2027, matched with contemporary compositions featuring Op. 18, No. 4 and Op. 127 paired with Anders Hillborg (b. 1954) - *Kongsgaard Variations* (2006)

*Sunday, November 16, 2025, 3:00 PM |*

*Tickets: \$10 - \$30*

### **Celebrating Helmut Lachenmann @ 90**

Sound Icon performs compositions by Helmut Lachenmann and select students including Helmut Lachenmann: *Guero*, Marc André: *Un-fini III*, Pierluigi Billone: *Mani.Δίκη*

*Wednesday, November 19, 2025, 8:00 PM |*

*Admission free*

Performances of Lachenmann's works by students from Boston-area conservatories including *Berliner Kirschblüten*, *Fünf Variationen über ein Thema von Franz Schubert*, *Wiegenmusik*, *Dal Niente*, *Marche Fatale*

*Friday, November 21, 2025, 6:30 PM |*

*Admission free*

Callithumpian Consort performs compositions by Helmut Lachenmann including *Pression für einen Cellisten*, *temA*, *Ein Kinderspiel*, *Serynade*

*Friday, November 21, 2025, 8:00 PM |*

*Admission free*