

# Today's program

SETH KNOPP, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

# Yellow Barn

## **A Tribute to Mario Davidovsky**

July 23, 2020 | 7:30 | The Big Barn, Putney, VT

### **Mario Davidovsky (1934-2019)**

Synchronisms No. 6 for Piano and Electronic Sounds (1970)

Seth Knopp, piano

Synchronisms No. 11 for Contrabass and Electronic Sounds (2005)

Lizzie Burns, double bass

Synchronisms No. 12 for Clarinet and Electronic Sounds (2016)

Yasmina Spiegelberg, clarinet

Synchronisms No. 3 for Cello and Electronic Sounds (1964)

Coleman Itzkoff, cello

Synchronisms No. 9 for Violin and Electronic Sounds (1988)

Alice Ivy-Pemberton, violin

Tonight's wall program was created by **Bill Kelly**.

## Program Notes

In speaking about his first experiences as a young composer, Mario Davidovsky told Yellow Barn's Artistic Director Seth Knopp, "What is important, I remember, about this particular moment, is the discovery of going into a room, completely stopping...living as a human being, but living only on one idea." Perhaps this is what we hear in the great composers: the conviction of a life unified by one idea.

Born in 1934 in Buenos Aires, Davidovsky was a pioneer in the field of electronic music. The best chamber music partners serve as an extension of one's own arm, constantly finding a balance between acting as a unit and retaining concrete personal identity. Davidovsky was the first composer to treat tape as partner, reveling in the new sounds available through technology, while still retaining spontaneity and musicality only possible in live performance. His set of twelve *Synchronisms*, five of which will be performed tonight, show the tape and musician on stage as equal partners, as a single spontaneous organism to grow and change. This set of pieces, the last of which was completed in 2006, is remembered as Davidovsky's most iconic work. *Synchronism #6* for piano and tape won him the Pulitzer Prize in 1971.

After finishing *Synchronisms #8*, Davidovsky returned for a time to acoustic work. His experiments with timbral and textural possibilities in the field of electronic music forever influenced how he heard traditional instruments. Always, his focus was on musicality, not just making exciting new sounds. Through his studies and his imagination, Davidovsky was able to make old instruments sound like something brand new. He told his students, "as I write, I tend to sing my music all the time...just to see how it breathes, how the pacing is."

Davidovsky began composing as a thirteen-year-old. When he was twenty-four, Aaron Copland invited him to study as a fellow at Tanglewood. In addition to his Pulitzer Prize, Davidovsky earned a Koussevitzky fellowship, two Rockefeller fellowships, and two Guggenheim fellowships during the

course of his long and successful career. As a beloved teacher in the United States and abroad, Davidovsky taught at the University of Michigan, the Instituto Torcuato di Tella in Buenos Aires, the Manhattan School, Yale University, City College, CUNY, Columbia University, and Harvard University. Colleague Brad Garton from Columbia University wrote after his death in 2019, that, “those fortunate to have known Mario Davidovsky remember a bright and vibrant personality, full of creative energy.”

Davidovsky believed that the ethical impact of composers was tantamount—that every composer has a duty to decide and act on his or her own unique value system. He said, “music is the summation, the aggregate, of all the choices, all we do.”

—Annie Jacobs-Perkins