



Advance Program Notes

Third Coast Percussion

Lyrical Geometry

Friday, October 6, 2017, 7:30 PM

These Advance Program Notes are provided online for our patrons who like to read about performances ahead of time. Printed programs will be provided to patrons at the performances. Programs are subject to change.

Third Coast Percussion *Lyrical Geometry*

Sean Connors, Robert Dillon, Peter Martin, and David Skidmore

Wild Sound, part 4 (2014)

Table Music (1987)

Resounding Earth, Mvt. II, Prayer (2012)

Mallet Quartet (2009)

Glenn Kotche (b. 1970)

Thierry De Mey (b. 1956)

Augusta Read Thomas (b. 1964)

Steve Reich (b. 1936)

INTERMISSION

BEND (2016)

Ordering-instincts (2014)

Blindnesses (2012)

Qi (2017)

Aliens with Extraordinary Abilities (2016)

Don't Eat Your Young

Take Anything You Want

Torched and Wrecked

Peter Martin (b. 1980)

Robert Dillon (b. 1980)

Isaac Schankler (b. 1979)

Thomas

David Skidmore (b. 1982)

Program Notes

WILD SOUND

Chicago-based percussionist and composer Glenn Kotche has written pieces for world renowned ensembles, including Kronos Quartet and Yo Yo Ma's Silk Road Ensemble, and has released six albums of his own compositions. Since 2001 Kotche has also been the drummer and percussionist of groundbreaking rock band Wilco.

Wild Sound is a massive multi-media project developed by Kotche and Third Coast Percussion that utilizes custom instruments, many of which are created on stage during the performance. This performance features the final section of the piece, arranged for more standard pitched percussion instruments.

Wild Sound was commissioned by the University of Notre Dame's DeBartolo Performing Arts Center and the Chamber Music America Classical Commissioning Program, with generous funding provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Chamber Music America Endowment Fund. Additional support provided by the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra's Liquid Music Series and the National Forum of Music Wrocław.

Duration: 7 minutes

MUSIQUE DE TABLES (TABLE MUSIC)

Musique de Tables (Table Music) clearly displays Belgian composer and filmmaker Thierry De Mey's interest in merging the visual and audio aspects of music into a performance art that engages multiple senses. *Musique de Tables* is scored for three amplified "table surfaces," to be constructed by the performers and notated in a manner entirely unique to this composition. Every sound made by the performers is inseparable from a specific physical motion, and De Mey instructs the performers to create sounds/motions with such colorful names as "castanets," "the stone," "wind-shield wipers," and "the fan." This unique work of chamber music/choreography has become standard repertoire for percussion ensembles and other new music groups.

Duration: 8 minutes

RESOUNDING EARTH

Grammy-award winner Augusta Read Thomas was Mead Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Symphony from 1997-2006. She is the 16th ever University Professor (of five current University Professors) at The University of Chicago, and she was named one of the *Chicago Tribune's* "Chicagoans of the Year" in 2016. *Resounding Earth* is scored for four percussionists playing bells (and bell-like instruments) from a wide variety of cultures and historical periods. The piece was conceived as a cultural statement celebrating interdependence and commonality across all cultures and as a musical statement celebrating the extraordinary beauty and diversity of expression inherent in bell sounds.

Bells can be used to celebrate grand occasions, hold sacrificial rites, keep a record of events, give the correct time, celebrate births and weddings, mark funerals, caution a community, enhance any number of religious ceremonies, and are even hung around the necks of animals.

Resounding Earth was commissioned by The University of Notre Dame's DeBartolo Performing Arts Center, with additional funding from the Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts' Department of Music and the Chamber Music America Classical Commissioning Program, with generous funding provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Chamber Music America Endowment Fund.

Duration: 9 minutes

Program Notes, continued

MALLET QUARTET

American composer Steve Reich is widely viewed as one of the most influential composers of the last hundred years. His music is known for steady pulse, repetition, and a fascination with canons, and embraces harmonies and rhythmic concepts from non-Western and American vernacular music (especially jazz). While his early works are often categorized as “minimalist,” *Mallet Quartet* presents a more melodic style. The work is scored for two marimbas and two vibraphones and divided into three movements. In the fast outer movements the marimbas weave an interlocking motor rhythm over which the vibraphones play melodies, solo and in canon, while the slower middle movement utilizes the resonance of these instruments to create a more homogenous, lyrical texture less typical of Reich’s style.

To celebrate Reich’s 80th birthday in 2016, Third Coast Percussion released an album of Reich’s works, *Third Coast Percussion | Steve Reich* on Cedille Records, which won a Grammy for Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance, and a free mobile app exploring Reich’s music.

Duration: 15 minutes

BEND

Renowned as a soloist, chamber musician, and educator, Third Coast Percussion’s Peter Martin was assistant professor and director of percussion studies at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond before returning to Chicago in 2013 to pursue Third Coast Percussion full time. Martin has composed music for many of the group’s educational and concert projects in recent years.

His quartet, *BEND*, draws inspiration from the player piano compositions of Bruce Goff, a wonderfully unconventional architect and amateur composer. Many of Goff’s piano rolls were highly stylized geometric designs perforated into the scrolls, resulting in music that created very clear sonic “shapes.” Whereas these shapes would create the pitch and rhythm in a player piano performance, *BEND* translates these shapes into volume, tone, and gesture. The composer’s experience with the piano rolls— through a blurry, decades-old video—inspired an unconventional sound palette created with alternative techniques on two marimbas.

Duration: 8 minutes

ORDERING-INSTINCTS

Third Coast Percussion member Robert Dillon has enjoyed a career as an orchestral, solo, and chamber musician, as well as an educator for all ages, and since college, has pursued music composition as an additional expressive avenue. *Ordering-instincts* draws a big sound from a very compact setup of instruments. The four percussionists share eight wooden planks, an octave of loose crotals, and two tom-toms, from which they create a variety of different sonic colors in tightly interwoven rhythms. All musical content arises from the composite of all the players together; no one player’s part forms a complete voice by itself.

Ordering-instincts is dedicated to the DeBartolo Performing Arts Center at the University of Notre Dame on the occasion of its 10th anniversary.

Duration: 8 minutes

Program Notes, continued

BLINDNESSES

Isaac Schankler is a composer, pianist, accordionist and electronic musician based in Los Angeles. He writes music inspired by improvisation, indeterminacy, repetition, language, narrative, and puzzles. He creates work that is experimental while still engaging with the foundational elements of music: harmony, melody, time, and timbre—music that is beautiful while still allowing space for more unsettling experiences: uncertainty, anxiety, humor, and horror.

"Being close to someone can mean agreeing not to see parts of them, and in some sense *Blindnesses* is about the absences that this mutual understanding contains." —Isaac Schankler

Blindnesses is scored for four percussionists—sharing one vibraphone—and electronic sound processing. The electronic component of the piece at times adds a cavernous artificial resonance to the sound, while at other times, it plays back distorted fragments of music performed by the live musicians earlier in the piece. The four percussionists—whose movements must be meticulously choreographed to perform together on a single instrument—create their own stark sonic contrasts with a variety of mallets and acoustic pitch bending effects.

Duration: 9 minutes

Qi

Augusta Read Thomas's energized *Qi* sets four percussionists (sharing two marimbas) on a series of chases, volleys, and tumbling outbursts. *Qi* is the circulating vital life energy that in Chinese philosophy is thought to be inherent in all things, translating literally as "breath" or "air" and figuratively as "material energy," "life force," or "energy flow." Similar concepts can be found in many cultures and religions. Thomas's densely crafted writing fits the players together like gears or pairs them off into teams that hold two simultaneous conversations in the high and low registers, always imbued with a vibrant sense of forward momentum.

Qi was co-commissioned by John Bierbusse, Harve Ferrill in honor of Karla Scherer, Jane Heron, Matthew Meselson in honor of Jeanne Guillemin, Bruce Oltman in honor of Bonnie McGrath, Sidney Robinson, Bob Schmidt, John Schmidt, and Nick Yasillo in honor of Susan Yasillo, and is dedicated with admiration and gratitude to those who commissioned the work and to Third Coast Percussion.

Duration: 6 minutes

ALIENS WITH EXTRAORDINARY ABILITIES

The compositions of Third Coast Percussion member David Skidmore are performed regularly in concert halls and universities across the country. In 2011 his multi-movement work, *Common Patterns in Uncommon Time*, was commissioned by Frank Lloyd Wright scholar Sidney K. Robinson to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Taliesin, home of the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture. In 2007 his piece, *Unknown Kind*, premiered at Carnegie Hall. He has also received commissions from the Rush Hour Concert Series in Chicago and a number of leading percussion soloists and pedagogues.

Aliens with Extraordinary Abilities is a cycle of works exploring a common idea: that the same piece of music can move at several different speeds at the same time. An electronic audio track—Skidmore's most intensive work with electronic composition to date—expands and reinforces the live percussion in many of these works, and video artist Xuan was commissioned to create accompanying video. Many of the individual pieces take their cryptic names from memorable Third Coast Percussion touring experiences or inside jokes.

Duration: 15 minutes

Biography

Third Coast Percussion is a Grammy Award-winning, artist-run quartet of classically trained percussionists hailing from the great city of Chicago. For over 10 years, the ensemble has forged a unique path in the musical landscape with virtuosic, energetic performances that celebrate the extraordinary depth and breadth of musical possibilities in the world of percussion. The ensemble has been praised for “commandingly elegant” (*New York Times*) performances, the “rare power” (*Washington Post*) of their recordings, and “an inspirational sense of fun and curiosity” (*Minnesota Star-Tribune*). The four members of Third Coast are also accomplished teachers, and since 2013 have served as ensemble-in-residence at the University of Notre Dame’s DeBartolo Performing Arts Center.

A direct connection with the audience is at the core of all of Third Coast Percussion’s work, whether the musicians are speaking from the stage about a new piece of music, inviting the audience to play along in a concert or educational performance, or inviting their fans around the world to create new music using one of their free mobile apps.

Third Coast Percussion maintains a busy touring schedule, with past performances in 32 of the 50 states, plus Canada, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Poland, and venues ranging from concert halls at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and De Doelen to clubs and alternative performance spaces, such as New York’s Le Poisson Rouge and the National Gallery’s West Garden Court.

The quartet’s curiosity and eclectic taste have led to a series of unlikely collaborations that have produced exciting new art. The ensemble has worked with engineers at the University of Notre Dame, architects at the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, dancers at Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, and musicians from traditions ranging from the mbira music of Zimbabwe’s Shona people to indie rockers to some of the world’s leading concert musicians. A commission for a new work from composer Augusta Read Thomas in 2012 led to the realization that commissioning new musical works can be—and should be—as collaborative as any other artistic partnership. Through extensive workshopping and close contact with composers, Third Coast Percussion has commissioned and premiered new works from Donnacha Dennehy, Glenn Kotche, Lei Liang, Gavin Bryars, Christopher Cerrone, Timo Andres, Marcos Balter, Ted Hearne, and today’s leading up and coming composers through their Emerging Composers Partnership Program. These works have become part of the ensemble’s core repertoire and have seen hundreds of performances across North America and throughout Europe.

Third Coast Percussion’s recordings include three full-length albums, three EPs, and a number of appearances on other releases. The quartet has put its stamp on iconic percussion works by John Cage and Steve Reich, and Third Coast has also created first recordings of commissioned works by Augusta Read Thomas, David T. Little, and Ted Hearne, in addition to recordings of the ensemble’s own compositions. In 2017 the ensemble won the Grammy Award for Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble performance for their recording of Steve Reich’s works for percussion.

Third Coast Percussion has always maintained strong ties to the vibrant artistic community in their hometown of Chicago. They have collaborated with Chicago institutions such as Hubbard Street Dance Chicago and the Adler Planetarium; performed at the grand opening of Maggie Daley Children’s Park; conducted residencies at the University of Chicago, Northwestern University, and the Civic Orchestra of Chicago; created multi-year collaborative projects with Chicago-based composers Augusta Read Thomas, Glenn Kotche, and chamber ensemble Eighth Blackbird; and taught tens of thousands of students through partnerships with Urban Gateways, the People’s Music School, the Chicago Park District, Rush Hour Concerts, and others.

The four members of Third Coast Percussion met while studying percussion music at Northwestern University. Members of Third Coast also hold degrees from the Eastman School of Music, Rutgers University, the New England Conservatory, and the Yale School of Music.

Stay up to date and go behind the scenes by following Third Coast on Twitter (@ThirdCoastPerc), Facebook (@Third Coast Percussion), and Instagram (@ThirdCoastPercussion). Third Coast Percussion is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization.

Engagement Events

Wednesday, October 4, 2017, 10-11 AM

SCHOOL-DAY PERFORMANCE | THIRD COAST PERCUSSION: THINK OUTSIDE THE DRUM

Think Outside the Drum is an introduction to the building blocks of music (rhythm, melody, and timbre) through active participation in a series of interactive activities, including clapping, singing, and a listening game. Students will learn about the extraordinary range of percussion instruments that can be found in cultures around the world, as well as in their own kitchen cabinets.

Wednesday, October 4, 2017, 1-2 PM

THIRD COAST PERCUSSION | WORKSHOP: WAVES

The WAVES Program (Wonder, Arts, Vibration, Engineering, Science) is an interactive educational presentation exploring the scientific and musical properties of sound waves. The four members of Third Coast Percussion perform music, teach students about sound waves using app-based technology and video projections, then pass out custom-designed percussion instruments to all audience members and teach the audience to perform a piece of music together with Third Coast Percussion.

Thursday, October 5, 2017

CLASS VISIT: APPLIED PERCUSSION

During their visit, members of Third Coast Percussion conducted a workshop with Virginia Tech percussion students, hosted by Annie Stevens, assistant professor, School of Performing Arts.

Special thanks to Annie Stevens

For Virginia Tech Students

The Division of Student Affairs invites you to engage in the Aspirations for Student Learning to do more, be more, and aspire to be your best self.

Aspirations for Student Learning

Commit to unwavering **CURIOSITY**

Pursue **SELF-UNDERSTANDING** and **INTEGRITY**

Practice **CIVILITY**

Prepare for a life of **COURAGEOUS LEADERSHIP**

Embrace **UT PROSIM** (That I May Serve) as a way of life

One way to work toward these aspirational goals is to engage in Keystone Happenings. Keystone Happenings highlight the Aspirations for Student Learning, provide opportunities for learning, and challenge students to reflect. Search "keystone" on GobblerConnect at gobblerconnect.vt.edu/events to discover these opportunities.

Keystone Happening Reflections for Third Coast Percussion

In their educational programs for youth, Third Coast Percussion explore the intersection of sound and science. What aspects of this evening's program seemed to bridge disciplines? How?

For more resources for educators, students, and lifelong learners to help you dig deeper and engage with this performance and our other season performances, view our Learning Guide at artscenter.vt.edu/experiences.

In the Galleries



RADCLIFFE BAILEY

September 14-December 9, 2017

Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery and Sherwood Payne Quillen '71 Reception Gallery

Painter, sculptor, and mixed media artist Radcliffe Bailey (American, based in Atlanta, Georgia) layers found objects, materials, and potent imagery to explore connections between past and present, personal experience and collective memory. In this installation, Bailey references historical and ancestral communities and migrations, including enslaved African peoples escaping through Virginia's Great Dismal Swamp, while examining concepts of identity race, culture, and the mnemonic power of objects. For more information on this artist, please visit jackshainman.com/artists.

GALLERY HOURS

Monday-Friday, 10 AM-5:30 PM

Saturday, 10 AM-4 PM

To arrange a group tour or class visit, please contact Meggin Hicklin, exhibitions program manager, at megh79@vt.edu.

Pictured:

Windward Coast—West Coast Slave Trade, 2009-2011 (detail)

Piano keys, plaster bust, and glitter

Dimensions variable, shown here in black and white

©Radcliffe Bailey

Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York