

THIRD:COAST  
PERCUSSION









“Creative fearlessness with reverent precision”

-BBC Music Magazine

Stay up-to-date and go behind-the-scenes by following Third Coast:

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Front cover photo and photo above by Saverio Truglia

Third Coast Percussion is a **Grammy Award-winning** artist-run quartet of classically-trained percussionists hailing from the great city of Chicago. For over ten 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, and the “rare power” (*Washington Post*) of their recordings. 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 33 of the 50 states plus Canada, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Poland**, and performances this season at BAM, Cal Performances, University Musical Society, the Krannert Center, Segerstrom Center for the Arts, the Joyce Theater, and the ensemble’s first tour of Asia.

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 direct connection with the audience is at the core of all of Third Coast Percussion’s work

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 **Philip Glass, Devonté Hynes, Donnacha Dennehy, Glenn Kotche, Lei Liang, Gavin Bryars, Christopher Cerrone**, 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 seen hundreds of performances across North America and throughout Europe.

Through their recordings, the quartet has put its stamp on iconic percussion works by John Cage and Steve Reich, and they have 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.



## 2018-19

- Chicago Cubs “The Line Up”, Chicago, IL
- Guggenheim Work and Process, New York, NY
- Hubbard Street Dance, Harris Theater, Chicago, IL
- UAB Alys Stephens Center, Birmingham, AL
- University Musical Society, Ann Arbor, MI
- BAM Next Wave Festival, Brooklyn, NY
- Ohio University, Athens, OH
- Chicago Humanities Festival, Chicago, IL
- Clemson University, Clemson, SC
- Detroit Institute of Art, Detroit, MI
- Liquid Music Series, St. Paul, MN
- Wallis Annenberg Center, Beverly Hills, CA
- Cal Performances, Berkeley, CA
- Baylor University, Waco, TX
- Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA
- Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA
- Krannert Center, Champaign-Urbana, IL
- Millersville University, Millersville, PA
- Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
- McKendree University, Lebanon, IL
- Washington University, St. Louis, MO
- Denison University, Denison, OH
- The Joyce Theater, New York, NYC
- University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN
- San Francisco Performances, San Francisco, CA
- Segerstrom Center for the Arts, Costa Mesa, CA
- Town Hall Seattle, Seattle, WA
- Cal Tech, Pasadena, CA
- Miller Theater, Columbia University, New York, NY
- Civic Orchestra of Chicago, Chicago, IL
- Taiwan International Percussion Festival, Taipei, Taiwan

For booking, contact TCP's managing director, Liz Pesnel:

**[liz@thirdcoastpercussion.com](mailto:liz@thirdcoastpercussion.com)**



**“Vibrant...superb”**  
-Alex Ross, *The New Yorker*

**“They play as if they’re a single,  
eight-armed organism”**  
-NPR Music

Photo by Barbara Johnson

# PERFORMANCES

## Past Seasons

- Meany Center at the University of Washington, Seattle, WA
- Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH
- Eugene Symphony Orchestra (concerto), Eugene, OR
- Chicago Philharmonic Orchestra (concerto), Chicago, IL
- Peak Performances, Montclair, NJ
- Society for the Performing Arts, Houston, TX
- MiTO Settembre Festival, Milan and Turin, Italy
- The Clarice at the University of Maryland
- Walton Arts Center, Fayetteville, AR
- Chamber Music Pittsburgh
- The Hult Center, Eugene, OR
- Overture Center, Madison, WI
- Celebrity Series, Boston, MA
- National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC
- Eastman School of Music, Kilbourn Chamber Music Series, Rochester, NY
- Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL
- Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY
- De Doelen, Rotterdam, Netherlands
- Millennium Park – Chicago, IL
- National Forum for Music, Wrocław, Poland
- Town Hall Seattle, Seattle, WA
- Walla Walla Chamber Music Festival, Walla Walla, WA
- Mondavi Center, Davis, CA
- San Francisco Performances
- Kennedy Center, Washington, DC
- St. Paul Chamber Orchestra - Liquid Music Series, St. Paul, MN
- Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival, Vail, CO



# CONCERT PROGRAMS

## Perpetuum

Available in 2019/20

**“Electric energy” – *The New York Times***

As the percussion section has moved from the back of the orchestra to center stage, Third Coast Percussion has been leading the way. Incorporating their classical training with stylistic influences ranging from Zimbabwean mbira music to art rock, the ensemble lights up the stage at every concert with “an inspirational sense of fun and curiosity.” (*Minnesota Star-Tribune*). This program highlights the very best of the ensemble’s recent work, including new pieces by musical icon Philip Glass, polyglot artist Devonté Hynes, and the ensemble’s own compositions. **General Availability.**

## TCP with Hubbard Street Dance Chicago

**“Take a deep breath, because Hubbard Street Dance Chicago is going to take your breath away” – *The Washington Post***

Third Coast Percussion and the world-renowned modern company Hubbard Street Dance Chicago are offering an evening-length work with three choreographers who are redefining what it means to make dance today—Emma Portner, famous for her imaginative viral dance videos, and Lil Buck and Jon Boogz, co-founders of Movement Art Is. Original music was composed for the project by British singer, songwriter, composer, producer, dancer, and director Devonté Hynes. **The show will tour select dates in the fall of 2019.**

## PADDLE TO THE SEA

A NEW PROJECT FROM  
THIRD COAST PERCUSSION

## Paddle to the Sea

**“Arresting and enjoyable” – *Dallas Morning News***

The classic Academy Award-nominated film, *Paddle to the Sea* (1961), is the focus of this new project that looks at our relationship to the bodies of water that connect our lives. Third Coast Percussion composed a new score to be performed live with the film, alongside existing works inspired by impressions of water and the natural world, including music by composers Philip Glass and Jacob Druckman and the traditional music of the Shona people of Zimbabwe. **Available in the winter of 2020.**

## The Bell Ringers

**“Dozens of performers of all experience levels join Third Coast for a large-scale performance project”**

Composer and arts educator Danny Clay and Third Coast Percussion are teaming up to create a new evening-length work that will invite participation from performers of a wide range of experience levels—from professionals to novices. The piece will be performed in a public location with the audience moving freely throughout the performance space, and draw influence from Clay’s use of the elements of “play” and community-building in his works. **General Availability.**

**“Virtuosity and deft, precisely timed wit”**

*-Washington Post*



Photo by Rich Polk

Plus new projects in development with composers **Missy Mazzoli, Tyondai Braxton, Georg Friedrich Haas**, and more.





**“Commandingly elegant”**

*New York Times*

# TEACHING, RESIDENCIES, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Third Coast Percussion offers interactive hands-on learning and music-making experiences for a wide range of students and community members.

“Working with the musicians in Third Coast Percussion was enlightening, refreshing, and truly inspiring. It is rare that we host artists who invest as much energy, thought and sensitivity into their community-based work as they do their stage work. TCP does just that and also brings humility, authenticity and extreme skill into every activity, every moment of planning and every interaction. We look forward to bringing the ensemble back to College Park soon!”

*-Jane Hirshberg, Campus and Community Engagement Manager, The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center*



- Interdisciplinary collaborations across a wide range of disciplines, including engineering, architecture, astronomy, dance, and more
- Collaborative performances with students
- Master classes on topics including entrepreneurship, 20th/21st century music performance, chamber music skills, and more

- Coachings for chamber music groups of any instrumentation
- Educational performances in schools, libraries, and more
- Pre-concert and post-concert discussions and audience feedback
- Performances and workshops for conducting students
- Reading, performing, and coaching student compositions

Top photo by Michael Penn, bottom right and left photos by Geoff Sheil



## THINK OUTSIDE THE DRUM

**A Fun, Interactive, and Educational Presentation for All Ages  
Introducing the Building Blocks of Music**

Performances by Third Coast Percussion are interspersed with teaching moments that introduce 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.

Think Outside the Drum is ideal for audiences ranging in age from pre-school to 6th grade. Alternative versions of the program are suited for 7th grade to 12th grade students. The program is also well suited for all-ages family audiences. Any size audience can be accommodated.



## MUSIC COMPOSITION PROJECT

**Students Compose an Original Piece of Music  
and Perform it with TCP**

Over a 4-day residency, TCP performs for the students, introduces three building blocks of music (melody, rhythm, and musical textures), leads the students in breakout sessions where all students create their own melodies, rhythms, and textures, then TCP leads the full ensemble of students in assembling the musical building blocks into a final piece.

Available for groups of between 30-40 students with assistance and supervision from the students' regular music teacher.

# EDUCATION PROGRAMS

**Contact [liz@thirdcoastpercussion.com](mailto:liz@thirdcoastpercussion.com) for more details.**

## WAVES

**An Interactive Presentation and Performance  
Exploring the Science Behind Sound**

Students learn about the scientific and musical properties of sound waves (amplitude/dynamics, frequency/pitch, etc.) by participating in interactive activities using app-based technology to visualize learning objectives.

All students participate in an interactive musical performance with members of TCP, reinforcing the learning objectives on percussion instruments custom-designed for this project. No prior musical experience is necessary.

Available for audiences ranging in age from 3rd grade to 6th grade (9 years old to 12 years old). Audiences may not exceed 150. Video projection required, minimum 2-hour load in before first performance.



Bottom left photo by Karli Cadel  
Top photo by Kirk Richard Smith  
Right photo by Geoff Sheil

**“The residency was an unqualified success! You were so generous with your time in working with and playing for audiences of all ages and backgrounds across the campus.”**

*-Amy Iwano, Executive Director, University of Chicago Presents*





It's difficult to determine why one group succeeds and another fails, but Third Coast Percussion have gotten this far in large part due to their self-sufficient business model and cooperative creative process. TCP also distinguish themselves by writing music collectively—though composer-performers are common in the new-music world, it's unusual for the composer to be an entire group.

Compared to, say, string quartets, percussion ensembles are a relatively young phenomenon—they became established in the mid-20th century through works by the likes of John Cage and Iannis Xenakis, and Steve Reich helped cement their place. As a result, the repertoire for such groups is relatively paltry, and Third Coast have always actively sought out new work.

Composer Glenn Kotche credits the members of Third Coast with making his 2015 commission possible. “After they approached me, I came to them with the concept and eventually all of the music and the structure of *Wild Sound*,” he says. “But that still left plenty of room for collaboration in respect to the multitude of unspecified details concerning setup, transitions both physically and musically, how some of the sounds and instruments would be designed and assembled, as well as many other aspects. The strengths, decisions, and personalities of those four—they poured themselves into the piece and ultimately made it what it was.”

This versatility and accessibility augur well for TCP's latest project with Hubbard Street Dance. In 2014 the group played Reich's *Drumming* to accompany the troupe's performance of Jiří Kylián's dance piece *Falling Angels*, but their upcoming collaboration will take Third Coast far from that familiar ground: working with composer Devonté Hynes and choreographer Emma Portner definitely widens the group's range of artistic partners. “Third Coast are, collectively, an undeniably brilliant group of music artists who collaborate very often,” Portner says. “They are already so open to our ideas and really know what it takes to collaborate successfully. I know they will bring Dev's ideas to life and beyond. I'm excited for all of these elements to come together.”

Third Coast will no doubt continue to find even bigger opportunities with an even wider range of presenters and collaborators, but their members maintain a level-headed attitude about the niche position of classical music in the larger world—they know that most of the people they reach as their audience grows will be newcomers to these sounds. Because they take pleasure in introducing listeners to what they love, rather than getting frustrated that they still have to do so, they're in a great position to enjoy a long and healthy career.

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At first, there's just a drip: a gentle pulse from a marimba. Then a bewitching melody played on a set of tuned cowbells enters and the music comes into focus. The four musicians in the Chicago-based Third Coast Percussion let the piece unfold deliberately. They play as if they're a single, eight-armed organism.

“Madeira River,” named for an Amazon River tributary, is vintage Philip Glass — up to a point. The melody floats on a bed of relentless eighth notes. The rumble of an organ recalls the teeth-rattling opening to Glass' *Koyaanisqatsi* film score. But Third Coast Percussion's arrangement teems with odd overtones from metal pipes and Thai gongs. They lend the music a sense of frailty rarely heard in recordings of Glass' work.

A sense of understatement gives this interpretation much of its potency. It's one of four short *Aguas da Amazonia* pieces by Glass the group arranged for the upcoming album *Paddle to the Sea*. Glass fans may recall the vivid, equally percussive, renditions released by the Brazilian group Uakti in 1999.

**“Chicago's dynamic percussion quartet has built an admirable niche for itself within the city's growing community of contemporary classical ensembles while serving as an entrepreneurial model for the others.”**

-John von Rhein, Chicago Tribune

GRAMOPHONE  
THE WORLD'S BEST CLASSICAL MUSIC REVIEWS

**“An Array of Percussion”**

June 25, 2018

by Pwyll ap Siôn

Gone are the days when percussion players would spend their time counting empty bars at the back of the orchestra. The percussion section now plays an integral part in any symphony orchestra's sonic armoury. Yet the most exciting work continues to take place away from the conductor's podium through percussion groups and ensembles. These highly flexible and adaptable mini-multi-orchestras form a natural tributary for today's many stylistic cross-currents. Western, non-Western, classical, folk, jazz, avant-garde or pop — such diverse influences converge and connect in these more flexible contexts, resulting in inventive cross-fertilisations and creative collaborations.

Chicago-based Third Coast Percussion epitomise this new dynamic new breed. Following on from their award-winning disc of music by Steve Reich (Cedille, 6/16), *Paddle to the Sea* showcases the percussion quartet's talents as composers and performers. The central work is the group's evocative soundtrack to the Academy Award-nominated film *Paddle to the Sea*, produced by the National Film Board of Canada in 1966, itself based on Holling C. Holling's 1941 children's book of the same name.

The score, which makes use of a bewildering array of instruments ranging from marimbas, vibraphones and drum kit to glass bowls, tuned cowbells, pitched desk bells, ceramic tiles and sand blocks, could have easily resulted in a dense textural tangle laden with special effects. However, Third Coast Percussion's acutely sensitive approach to sound yields a work that glides effortlessly and subtly between animated rhythmic sections and moments of serene, tranquil reflection.



Budding composers are well advised to write for standard instrumentation: The simpler and more common the forces required, the higher the chances of a piece getting performances beyond the premiere.

But Augusta Read Thomas, the subject of a Composer Portraits series at Columbia University's Miller Theater on Thursday and the recipient of numerous prizes and orchestral commissions, is no longer a novice. In fact, according to statistics released last year by ASCAP, a performing rights organization, she topped their list of most frequently performed living composers in 2013-14.

She has permission, then, if any were needed, to think big. "Resounding Earth," a 30-minute work for percussion quartet that received its New York premiere at Miller this week by the commandingly elegant Third Coast Percussion, calls for a battery of some 300 metal instruments, including tiny cymbal-like crotales, giant gongs, Burmese temple bells and metal coils. The work was developed in close collaboration with the Third Coast players and has been released on a beautiful CD by New Focus Recording.

But there's nothing quite like the hypnotic experience of being immersed live in the shimmering, thrumming, pealing sound cloud created by these instruments, many of which have ceremonial powers in their cultures of origin. The work is divided into four movements, each dedicated to two or three influential 20th-century composers, with each one inhabiting a distinct mood. There was the brightness of "Invocation" (Messiaen and Stravinsky), a heady brew of overtones in "Prayer" (Berio and Boulez), the throbbing plasticity of "Mantra" (Lou Harrison and Ligeti), in which the players twirled bells before striking them so that the sound approximated a trill as the bell unwound itself, and the supremely vocal quality of "Reverie" (Varèse, Partch and Cage). The choreography of the performers is an integral part of any percussion piece and the Third Coast members were a delight to watch, moving with a riveting blend of precision and fluidity.

...Mr. Streisfeld and Mr. Richards returned as part of the JACK Quartet for "Invocations" from "Sun Threads," a piece in a heroic mode characterized by forward-looking energy. The two quartets — JACK and Third Coast Percussion — joined forces for the world premiere of "Selene," a work alive with dance rhythms and vibrant colors that included both moments of painterly delicacy and comical touches. An ambitious piece taking in a wide range of moods and sonic landscapes, it received a premiere so persuasive and well balanced as to make a case for the percussion-string octet as a new standard form.

That suited the players, whose energy was as much choreographic as musical: Movements and interpretations were both exact and amplified, phrasing and gesture inseparably enthusiastic.

**"The choreography of the performers is an integral part of any percussion piece and the Third Coast members were a delight to watch, moving with a riveting blend of precision and fluidity."**  
-Corinna da Fonesca-Wolheim, The New York Times



## SONOROUS EARTH

by **Augusta Read Thomas**

"Imagine myriad points of light, or multiple showers of shiny metallic objects, flashing across the cosmos, and you get a sense of what this arresting and evocative music sounds like." - *Chicago Tribune*

*Sonorous Earth* is a new piece for Third Coast Percussion with orchestra from internationally-acclaimed composer Augusta Read Thomas. The four percussionists play a battery of over 300 bells and bell-like instruments from a wide variety of cultures and historic periods. The project is 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 all bell sounds.

**Duration: 35 minutes, 4 movements. Individual movements may be performed as stand-alone works.**

## NEW WORK

by **Christopher Cerrone**

"There are fanciful dramatic outbursts as well, but mostly the [music] sounds as if it floats, very agreeably, on an acoustical cushion slightly lighter than air." - *LA Times*

Winner of a 2015 Rome Prize and a finalist for the 2014 Pulitzer Prize, the Brooklyn-based composer Christopher Cerrone is internationally acclaimed for compositions which range from opera to orchestral, from chamber music to electronic. This project will be his third collaboration with Third Coast Percussion. Scheduled to premiere May 2019. Orchestration TBD.

**Duration: 18-20 minutes.**

## RADIANT CHiLD

by **David T. Little**

"One of the most imaginative young composers [on the scene]" - *The New Yorker*

RADIANT CHiLD is a micro-concerto for percussion quartet and chamber orchestra. In three connected movements, it explores joy, fear, the redundancy of work, and the ultimate need for release that we all experience, but in particular in regard to parenthood. **Duration: 10 minutes.**

Orchestration: 1.1.1.1-1.1.0-perc(4)-strings  
Orchestration (wind ensemble arrangement): 2.picc.2.EbCl.4.bcl.contraCl.2.contra/  
sopsax.altosax.tensax.barisax/ 4.4.2.btn.euph.1/cb/pno



For booking information, contact Liz Pesnel:

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Photo by Saverio Truglia