



THIRD:COAST
PERCUSSION



2021/2022/2023



“Creative fearlessness with reverent precision”

-BBC Music Magazine

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Front cover photo and photo above by Saverio Truglia

*Third Coast Percussion is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization.

Third Coast Percussion is a Grammy Award-winning Chicago-based

percussion quartet. For fifteen years, the ensemble has created exciting and unexpected performances that constantly redefine the classical music experience. 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*). Third Coast Percussion maintains a busy tour schedule, with **past performances in 35 of the 50 states and Washington, D.C., plus international tour dates in Canada, Colombia, Hong Kong, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom.**

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. The four members of Third Coast are also accomplished teachers, and make active participation by all students the corner stone of all their educational offerings.

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 and footwork producers, to some of the world's leading concert musicians. Third Coast Percussion served as ensemble-in-residence at the University of Notre Dame's DeBartolo Performing Arts Center from 2013-2018, and currently serves as ensemble-in-residence at Denison University.

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 by **Philip Glass, Clarice Assad, Devonté Hynes, Jlin, Tyondai Braxton, Danny Elfman, Augusta Read Thomas, Donnacha Dennehy, Glenn Kotche, Christopher Cerrone, Georg Friedrich Haas, David T. Little**, and today's leading up-and-coming composers through their Emerging Composers Partnership Program. TCP's commissioned works have become part of the ensemble's core repertoire and seen hundreds of performances across four continents.

Third Coast Percussion's recordings include twelve feature albums, and appearances on eleven additional 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 Philip Glass, Augusta Read Thomas, Devonté Hynes, Gavin Bryars, Donnacha Dennehy, David T. Little, Ted Hearne, and more, 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.** In 2020 Third Coast received its second nomination in the same category for *Perpetuum*, featuring works by Gavin Bryars, Philip Glass, and members of the ensemble.

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, the Chicago Children's Choir, the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, and the Adler Planetarium, performed at the grand opening of Maggie Daley Children's Park, conducted residencies at the University of Chicago 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 the People's Music School, the Chicago Park District, Rush Hour Concerts, Urban Gateways, and others.

The four members of Third Coast Percussion (Sean Connors, Robert Dillon, Peter Martin, and David Skidmore) met while studying percussion music at Northwestern University with Michael Burritt and James Ross. 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.

2020/21 Season

- Carnegie Hall, New York, NY
- Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Milwaukee, WI
- Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, Philadelphia, PA
- Hancher Auditorium, Iowa City, IA
- Philharmonie de Paris, Paris, France
- Philharmonic Society of Orange County, Costa Mesa, CA
- La Jolla Music Society, La Jolla, CA
- George Mason University, Fairfax, VA
- Berea College, Berea, KY
- Pablo Center at the Confluence, Eau Claire, WI
- Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH
- Emory University, Atlanta, GA
- Holtschneider Performance Center at DePaul University, Chicago, IL
- Cemal Resit Rey Concert Hall, Istanbul, Turkey
- Eesti Kontserts, Tallinn, Estonia
- Klaipeda Concert Hall, Klaipeda, Lithuania
- Elkhart County Symphony, Elkhart, IN
- Fox Cities Performing Arts Center, Appleton, WI
- Lawrence University, Appleton, WI
- Denison University, Granville, OH
- Dickinson College, Carlisle, PA
- Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL
- Unity Temple, Oak Park, IL
- Le Lieu Unique, Nantes, France
- Constellation, Chicago, IL



“Absolute masters”

-BBC Music Magazine

PERFORMANCES



“Relentless focus and energy”
-The New York Times

CONCERT PROGRAMS

Perspectives

“Third Coast Percussion brings out the choreographic element of percussion work”

- National Sawdust

Perspectives invites listeners to embark on a 70-minute musical adventure, featuring virtuosic percussion repertoire written for TCP by some of today’s leading composers and music creators. Anchoring the program is iconic film composer Danny Elfman’s *Percussion Quartet* and selections from *Perspective* by the innovative electronic music producer Jlin. Both artists embody the exciting diversity of 21st century creativity, drawing inspiration from a wide range of influences and points of view. Audio/video program notes delivered directly by the composers, live overhead camera projections of TCP’s fascinating collection of instruments, interactive Q&A with the audience, and Third Coast Percussion’s infectious energy add up to a truly unforgettable concert experience.



Metamorphosis

Choreography by Movement Art Is (Lil Buck and Jon Boogz) performed by Marcus Battle and Ron Myles

“MAI advocates for social change while expressing how vital dance can be” - The Atlantic

Third Coast Percussion joins forces with the groundbreaking choreography of Movement Art Is for an intimate, evening-length program that explores the duality of human nature. At once intensely personal and fiercely virtuosic, two disparate styles of street dance blend seamlessly with new music by Jlin and Tyondai Braxton, as well as Third Coast Percussion’s critically-acclaimed arrangements of Philip Glass’s *Agua da Amazonia*.

Archetypes

with Sérgio and Clarice Assad

Third Coast Percussion teams up with Sérgio and Clarice Assad for an evening-length program of original music based on the 12 Jungian archetypes: Innocent, Sage, Explorer, Rebel, Magician, Hero, Lover, Jester, Orphan, Caregiver, Ruler, Creator. **Album release March 2021.**



Collaborators pictured from top: **Danny Elfman** (photo credit: Brian Averill), **Jlin** (photo credit: Madhumita Nandi), **Tyondai Braxton** (photo credit: Grace Villamil), **Third Coast Percussion with Sérgio and Clarice Assad** (photo credit: Carolina Rodriguez)



Photo by Elliot Mandel

CONCERTOS

MEANDER, SPIRAL, EXPLODE

by **Christopher Cerrone**

“Third Coast Percussion collaborated animatedly with the orchestra in the gripping work, its three movements unfolding without pause.”

- *Chicago Tribune*

Duration: 15 minutes.

Orchestration: 2(I,II=Picc).2(II=EH).2(II=Bcl).2(II=Cbsn)-2.2.0.0-solo perc(4)-perc(2)-hp-pft-strings(min 8.7.6.6.4)

From me flows what you call Time

by **Toru Takemitsu**

“31 minutes of the most exquisite meditative quiet you have ever heard in a concert hall.”

- *Chicago Tribune*

Duration: 31 minutes.

Orchestration: 5 solo perc.3(2.,3.pic 3.af).3(2.obd'am 3.ca).4(2.Ebcl 3.bcl 4.cbcl).3(3.cbsn)-4.3.3.0-2hps.cel-strings(14.12.10.8.6)

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*

Duration: 35 minutes. Movements may be performed independently.

Orchestration: picc.2.2.2.2/2.2.2.0/2 perc./hp./strings

digital_TCP

digital_TCP delivers the best of Third Coast Percussion's performance and education programming, streamed directly to your audience.

- High quality multi-track audio
- Multi-camera HD video
- Multi-platform streaming on YouTube, Facebook, Twitch and more, with the ability to simultaneously stream on multiple additional channels
- Interactive audience chat throughout the performance
- Exclusive video content from guest artists and composers
- Live Q&A with the ensemble

“Third Coast Percussion is not only creating terrifically creative programming and performing it impeccably, they’re far and away one of the most entrepreneurial and engaging music ensembles to hit the airwaves. Co-sponsoring one of their livestreams was exciting for us and our audiences—a resounding success!”

-Margaret Lawrence, Director of Programming, Moss Arts Center, Virginia Tech





9 livestream concerts

digital_TCP Impact (March - July 2020)



40,000+

viewers from 24 countries and 5 continents



1 livestream album release event



14

livestream education & community engagement activities

PRESENTING PARTNERS

92Y
Black Mountain College
Museum + Arts Center
Chamber Music Society of Detroit
City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events

Denison University
DePauw University
Moss Arts Center at Virginia Tech
New Music Gathering
Stanford Live
UChicago Presents

IN DEVELOPMENT



“The 21st century’s gatecrasher of new classical music”
-NPR’s Turning the Tables

“My mission is to connect with people. The purpose of creating music is to feel less alone, to create a community around the work to express something that can’t be expressed in words.”

-Missy Mazzoli to San Francisco Classical Voice

Missy Mazzoli is composing her first-ever percussion quartet for Third Coast Percussion. Mazzoli has established herself as a significant force in the world of contemporary classical music. Her music has been commissioned and performed by the Metropolitan Opera, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Kronos Quartet, Carnegie Hall, and National Ballet of Canada. Her opera *Breaking the Waves* has been hailed as “among the best twenty-first-century American operas yet produced” by *Opera News*.

Available beginning Spring 2022. Co-commissioning opportunities available. Contact reba@thirdcoastpercussion.com for more information.

Photo credit: Marylene Mey

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.”

-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, faculty, and community members
- 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

“

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*

”



70+ educational presentations
offered each season



9,000+ students
engaged each season

Contact reba@thirdcoastpercussion.com

for more details

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.



“Commandingly elegant”
-New York Times



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

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.

The members of the dynamic young quartet Third Coast Percussion have, by their own account, a small problem as classically trained performers. None of the old masters – not Mozart, not Brahms, hell not even Stravinsky – left any music for percussion ensemble.

So the group members have taken it upon themselves to replenish the repertoire, both through their own compositions and by commissioning music from living composers they admire. The latest fruit of these efforts – a buoyant, enjoyable and somewhat distracted new opus by Philip Glass – was the centerpiece of the group's ingratiating recital on Wednesday, April 3, in Herbst Theatre.

Glass' "Perpetulum" was co-commissioned by San Francisco Performances, the concert's presenter, and it's a spirited compilation of various Glassian tropes channeled through this new and unexplored medium. (The piece is also the title track on Third Coast's expansive new recording.)

The old familiar harmonic progressions show up in new guises, and the rocking rhythmic patterns that suffuse so much of Glass' music take on a gently thrumming demeanor when transferred to the mallet instruments. What's striking, too, is the way "Perpetulum" bears a cousinly relationship to the distinctive contours and practices of Glass' writing for piano, which in turn is something of a stand-alone vein within the vast expanse of his output.

But the feature of "Perpetulum" that is most immediately evident, for better or worse, is Glass' delight in the range of sonorities and resources a percussion ensemble makes available to him. You can practically hear his serial excitement as he tackles one idea after another, dashing from instrument to instrument like a kid in a toy store.

This gives the 20-minute, three-movement piece an undeniable vivacity, combined with a certain short-attention-span quality that is frustrating and oddly uncharacteristic. Glass has never been one to shy away from exploring every implication of a given musical idea, at whatever length; to hear him skip about like this, leaving things introduced but unresolved, is slightly odd.

Third Coast, which comprises percussionists Sean Connors, Robert Dillon, Peter Martin and David Skidmore, gave the work a richly textured performance at any rate, and surrounded it with music that both flattered and set off its qualities.

Most exciting, perhaps, was "Death Wish," a piece for marimbas by the New Zealand-born composer Gemma Peacocke, in which repetitive rhythmic figures and minor-key harmonies grow increasingly off-kilter until seemingly anodyne material becomes urgent and a little menacing. Midway through, Peacocke conjures up a fierce but loving parody of Khachaturian's "Saber Dance" that demonstrates exactly why that music is so irresistible.

"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

For booking information, contact Reba Cafarelli:

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Photo by Saverio Truglia