

# THIRD COAST PERCUSSION

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 30 AT 2 P.M.**

LEIGHTON CONCERT HALL  
DeBartolo Performing Arts Center  
University of Notre Dame  
Notre Dame, Indiana

## CONCERT PROGRAM

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Fractalia (2011)

Mallet Quartet (2009)

Third Construction (1941)

Owen Clayton Condon (b. 1978)

Steve Reich (b. 1936)

John Cage (1912-1992)

## INTERMISSION

Resounding Earth (2012)

World Premiere

1. INVOCATION - *Pulse Radiance*
2. PRAYER - *Star Dust Orbits*
3. MANTRA - *Ceremonial Time Shapes*
4. REVERIE CARILLON - *Crystal Lattice*

Augusta Read Thomas (b. 1964)

*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, with additional funding from Chamber Music America Classical Commissioning Program, with generous funding provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Chamber Music America Endowment Fund.*

### **Fractalia: “A sonic celebration of fractals”**

Third Coast member Owen Clayton Condon writes music influenced by minimalism, electronica and taiko drumming. His newest piece, *Fractalia*, written for Third Coast Percussion, is a sonic celebration of fractals, geometric shapes whose parts are each a reduced-size copy of the whole (derived from the Latin *fractus*, meaning “broken”). Passing a repeated figure through four players in different registers of the marimba creates the kaleidoscopic fractured melodies within *Fractalia*. Condon's works for percussion, including *Fractalia*, have been featured as the soundtrack to video and light installations at Frank Lloyd Wright's “Fallingwater” and Anish Kapoor's “Cloud Gate,” the famous sculpture (affectionately referred to as “The Bean”) in Chicago's Millennium Park.

### **Mallet Quartet: “A gradually unfolding tapestry of patterns”**

Steve Reich (b. 1936), considered by many to be America's most influential living composer, is a pioneer of “minimalist” music—a term which, like many other musical style designations, is borrowed from the visual arts and applies better to some of Reich's compositions than others. Reich borrows harmonies from jazz and interlocking rhythms from the drums of Ghana. His music is highly repetitive, introducing one new element at a time into a gradually unfolding tapestry of patterns. The result is music of long, sustained harmonies, clear driving pulse and ecstatic energy.

Mallet Quartet (2009) is scored for two vibraphones and two five-octave marimbas. This is the first time Reich has written for five octave marimbas, extending down to cello C, and it adds a new level of warmth and depth to the sound palette.

The piece is in three movements: fast, slow, fast. In the two outer fast movements the marimbas, which in typical Reich style play in an interlocking canon, set a static harmonic background, over which the vibes present melodic material, first solo and then in canon. In the central slow movement, the texture becomes more sparse and transparent, particularly in the marimbas. This movement, with its thinner sound and longer phrases, marks new territory for Reich, and is a moment of unexpected stillness and beauty within this otherwise driving piece.

Mallet Quartet was co-commissioned by the Amadinda Quartet in Budapest (on the occasion of its 25th anniversary), by Nexus in Toronto, So Percussion in New York and Synergy Percussion in Australia.

### **Third Construction: “Percussion music is revolution”**

To refer to John Cage (1912-1992) as a composer would be an understatement; his ideas and influences on music and art are so far-reaching that he is often also deemed a poet, a philosopher, or, perhaps most fitting and all-encompassing, an artist. A revolutionary thinker who studied composition under Henry Cowell and Arnold Schoenberg, Cage produced work that centered primarily on the belief that there is no distinction between “sound” and “music.” This belief led Cage to experiment with the timbral possibilities

of percussion instruments and everyday objects. In doing so, Cage freed himself from traditional, harmonic-centered modes of music theory and foregrounded new possibilities for contemporary percussion music. His early works are some of the first pieces written for percussion ensemble, and they remain staples of the repertoire more than 50 years after they were first imagined.

*Third Construction* utilizes a wider array of instruments, including tin cans, split pieces of bamboo, a conch shell and the "lion's roar," a modified drum that uses friction to create an animal-like groaning sound. Despite very complex rhythms that often displace the listener's perception of the beat, the piece follows a more complex version of the "square" form used in the previous two constructions. In this case, there are 24 sections of 24 measures, and each player's sections are grouped according to a different scheme (for instance, the first player's phrases are always 2-8-2-4-5-3, while the fourth player's are 8-2-4-5-3-2).

**Resounding Earth: "Dedicated with admiration and gratitude to Third Coast Percussion"** –Augusta Read Thomas

for percussion quartet

playing approximately 300 pieces of metal

In four movements

1. INVOCATION - *Pulse Radiance*

(Homage to Olivier Messiaen and Igor Stravinsky)

Station #1: The musicians play their respective rack, table and floor instruments

2. PRAYER - *Star Dust Orbits*

(Homage to Luciano Berio and Pierre Boulez)

Station #2: The musicians play 26 Rin (Prayer Bells) and 10 Crotales

3. MANTRA - *Ceremonial Time Shapes*

(Homage to Lou Harrison and György Ligeti)

Station #3: The musicians play 18 Burma Bells (*Kyeezees*), 10 Noah Bells, 6 Gongs

4. REVERIE CARILLON - *Crystal Lattice*

(Homage to Edgard Varèse, Harry Partch and John Cage)

Stations #1, 2 and 3: The musicians play from every bell station on stage

Everything that we are made of, everything that we know and love, is made from the stars.

We (like all metals) are stardust. Metals are exceptionally resonant sound sources, rich with vibrational possibilities. As such, artisans across time and earth have been inspired to sculpt metals into musical instruments. About 300 items of metal are incorporated into the instrumentation of *RESOUNDING* (re-sounding) *EARTH* that can be heard and imagined as a *United-Nations-of-Resonances*.

Scored for four percussionists playing nothing but metals, bell-like instruments and bells from a wide variety of cultures and historical 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 metal and bell sounds.

Probing into bells' rich meanings and characteristics as carriers of history, ethnicity, and societal and cultural connotations is a joy and wonder. 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. As carriers of history and culture, of numerous shapes, sizes, types, decorative patterns, (Burma Bells for instance, have various etchings that involve the themes of elephants, humans and family) and of diverse weights, functions and cultural connotations, bells enrapture and inspire.

Bells are central to Augusta's music; bells permeate her music. For over 25 years, in every work for orchestra, and in many for smaller ensembles, she has been composing music frequently using percussion consisting of bell sounds (pitched metal percussion and all the mallet percussion instruments) many of which have their origins in other than Western musical cultures. As such, her new piece is an extreme extension of work she has been doing for decades.

Augusta said, "I treasure the opportunity to collaborate with the musicians in Third Coast Percussion because they are world-class virtuosi, visionary artists, and collegial, spectacular teammates. Involving a large battery of unique, ancient bells from around the world, our composition thus requires countless hours of refining nuances, colors, mallet choices, bell placements, and honing any number of other shadings, tunings, and gradations of the sound complexes. The musicians in Third Coast Percussion are brilliant, thoughtful and ardent collaborators."

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## AUGUSTA READ THOMAS

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Thomas was recently elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and was previously elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2009. Her catalog boasts more than 118 scores, commissioned by some of the most recognized performers, ensembles and conductors in the world. She was the Mead Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from 1997 through 2006, a residency that culminated in the premiere of *Astral Canticle*—one of two finalists for the 2007 Pulitzer Prize in Music.

*Resounding Earth* is the first of four major premieres by Augusta Read Thomas for the 2012-2013 season, including *Earth Echoes* with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, featuring mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke and baritone Nathan Gunn, on October 11 at Carnegie Hall in New York City; *Harvest Drum* on December 20 with the National Centre for the Performing Arts Symphony Orchestra, National Performing Arts Centre, Beijing; and *Cello Concerto No. 3*, with the world-renowned Boston Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Christoph Eschenbach, and featuring Lynn Harrell, cello, on March 14-16, 2013.

## THIRD COAST PERCUSSION

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Hailed by *The Guardian* for their “special fluency and zest that sets them apart,” Third Coast Percussion explores and expands the extraordinary sonic possibilities of the percussion repertoire, delivering vibrant performances for audiences of all kinds. Since its formation in 2005, Third Coast Percussion has gained national attention with concerts and recordings that meld the energy of rock music with the precision and nuance of classical chamber works.

These “savvy and hyper-talented young percussionists” (*Musical Toronto*) champion the awe-inspiring works of John Cage, Steve Reich, George Crumb, Arvo Pärt, Gérard Grisey, Philippe Manoury, Wolfgang Rihm, Louis Andriessen, Toru Takemitsu and Tan Dun, among others. Third Coast has also commissioned and performed world premieres by today’s brightest up-and-coming composers, including David T. Little, Marcos Balter, Matthew Barnson, Ted Hearne and ensemble members Owen Clayton Condon and David Skidmore. At today’s performance the ensemble premieres a major new work from acclaimed composer Augusta Read Thomas, scored for over 100 bells from around the world.

Third Coast’s recent and upcoming concerts and residencies include the University of Notre Dame’s DeBartolo Performing Arts Center, the Museum of Modern Art (New York), the Austin Chamber Music Festival, Millennium Park, the Kennedy Center’s Millennium Stage and more. Third Coast has also introduced percussion music to audiences in Texas, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Illinois, securing invitations to return to many of these series.

In addition to its national performances, Third Coast Percussion's hometown presence includes an annual Chicago series, with four to five concerts in locations around the city. The ensemble has collaborated in concert with acclaimed ensembles Eighth Blackbird, Signal and the Garth Newel Piano Quartet, pianists Amy Briggs and Lisa Moore, cellists Nicholas Photinos and Tobias Werner, flautist Tim Munro, vocalist Ted Hearne and video artists Luftwerk. Third Coast's passion for community outreach includes a wide range of residency offerings while on tour, in addition to a long-term residency with the Davis Square Park Community Band on Chicago's South Side.

The members of Third Coast Percussion –Owen Clayton Condon, Robert Dillon, Peter Martin, and David Skidmore–hold degrees in music performance from Northwestern University, the Yale School of Music, the New England Conservatory and Rutgers University.

Third Coast Percussion performs exclusively with Pearl/Adams Musical Instruments, Zildjian Cymbals, Remo Drumheads, and Vic Firth sticks and mallets.

# ensembleND

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