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Third Coast Percussion

Sean Connors

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With

Glenn Kotche

and UAB's Percussion Alumni

Iron Giant

(updated 2/21/18)

Program

Wild Sound, part 4

Glenn Kotche (b.1970)

Mallet Quartet

Steve Reich (b. 1936)

The Beautiful Confusion

(world premiere)

Kotche

Music for Pieces of Wood (arranged for 2 drumkits)

Reich (arr. David Cossin)

-----intermission-----

Paddle to the Sea

Third Coast Percussion

Chigwaya

Traditional/arr. Musekiwa Chingodza and TCP

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Program notes:

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 the groundbreaking rock band Wilco.

Wild Sound is a massive multi-media project developed by Glenn Kotche and Third Coast Percussion that utilizes custom instruments, many of which are created on stage during the performance. Tonight's concert 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

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

Glenn Kotche's newest work, *The Beautiful Confusion*, creates a unique opportunity to bring together Third Coast Percussion with the emerging musicians of UAB's percussion ensemble, as well as Kotche himself. The percussionists are divided into two ensembles that play unrelated music, with Kotche, as soloist, caught between them. Kotche writes:

The Beautiful Confusion is inspired by the idea of two groups with polar opposite ways of thinking, a situation increasingly common in our country. The 10-member ensemble is divided into two smaller groups, each of whom play their own kind of music. A group of five players plays a more traditional, precisely notated score: a strict process piece based off of a particular visual

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image (an extension of the peace symbol made from three overlapping geometric shapes). Each of these percussionists pulls double duty, playing both marimba and unpitched percussion instruments.

Four other percussionists play a series of more expressive, rhythmically free musical “miniatures.” These episodic events are signaled by strikes of a chime, and are grounded by a static timpani cadence that proceeds unhindered through most of the piece. This piece also features a drum kit - caught in the middle of these two sides - which gravitates from one ensemble to the other. The two ensembles perform concurrently - creating a sense of confusion during some of these events, but also beautifully coexisting during others.

The Beautiful Confusion was commissioned by the University of Alabama at Birmingham's Alys Stephens Center for the University of Alabama at Birmingham Percussion Ensemble and Third Coast Percussion.

Duration: 11 minutes

While many composers of the mid-20th century were crafting music driven by complex theoretical and numerical systems, Steve Reich was determined to create music that progressed through clearly audible processes. His *Music for Pieces of Wood* (arranged here for 2 drum kits) is a study in economy of means, both in terms of physical and musical materials. The three sections of the work are each comprised of a single rhythm, with a new version of the pattern building up in each voice before blending into the texture. Many of the rhythms that emerge along the way suggest alternative meters or rhythmic inflections that may change the listener's perception of the whole.

Duration: 6 minutes

The four members of Third Coast Percussion all compose their own music, and in recent years, have worked on projects that involve composing music together as a team. The quartet recently composed music to perform live with the 1966 film *Paddle to the Sea*, based on a children's book of the same name written in 1941. The film tells the story of a small wooden figure in a canoe, lovingly carved by a Native Canadian boy and set on a long journey through the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway, out to the Atlantic Ocean and beyond. The people who find “Paddle” along the way must choose, rather than keeping him for themselves, to send him further along the waterways, perhaps with a fresh coat of paint or a new rudder.

The quartet developed musical themes that correspond to many of the main themes in the film: the “boy theme,” first heard about minute into the film, puts a simple melody on pitched desk bells over playful skittering wood blocks, ceramic tiles, and other quirky sounds; the “journey” that begins a few minutes later is soaring, Philip Glass-inspired music for almglocken (tuned cowbells), drum set, and keyboards; the “placid” theme is a simple heartbeat in the low

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register of the marimba; and the sections the ensemble dubbed “turmoil” are marked by driving drum figures. These themes are developed and combined in different ways to form a musical narrative that parallels the exuberance, danger, loneliness, and infinite possibility of Paddle’s voyage.

Third Coast Percussion’s album “Paddle to the Sea,” featuring this music, as well as water-themed works that inspired this composition, was released on Cedille Records in February 2018.

Paddle to the Sea was commissioned with lead support from the Maxine and Stuart Frankel Foundation. The work was co-commissioned by the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Meany Center for the Performing Arts at University of Washington, ArtsLIVE at University of Dayton, and the University of Notre Dame’s DeBartolo Performing Arts Center.

Third Coast’s larger “Paddle to the Sea” project is supported by the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation, and a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, with additional support from the Elizabeth F Cheney Foundation, and is made possible through a collaboration with the National Film Board of Canada.



Duration: 30 minutes

One of the sources of musical inspiration for *Paddle to the Sea* comes from the traditional music of the Shona people of Zimbabwe. In recent years, the members of Third Coast Percussion have been fortunate to be able to expand their artistic practice and musical knowledge with a study of Shona music and culture and the mbira, a thumb piano that plays a leading role in this music. In preparation for the *Paddle to the Sea* project, the group studied *Chigwaya*, a song used to call water spirits in the Shona religion, with their Shona mentor **Musekiwa Chingodza**. Chigwaya – literally “the bream fish” – is a symbol for the water spirits or mermaid spirits, who can impart wealth or healing powers but can also be dangerous or demanding. As in many traditional Shona songs, each musician develops their own version of *Chigwaya*. The rendition in this program is Third Coast’s own mbira-focused interpretation of what they learned from Musekiwa. Listeners are encouraged to explore Musekiwa Chingodza’s own discography and learn more about this great artist through Kutsinhira Cultural Arts Center, the Oregon-based nonprofit that hosts his biennial visits to the United States.

Duration: 5 minutes

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Performer bios:

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, 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 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

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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.

Chicago-based percussionist and composer **Glenn Kotche** has been hailed as one of the most exciting, creative and promising composers and performers in modern music, receiving international attention for his "unfailing taste, technique and discipline" (Chicago Tribune). After 3 solo records, including his 2006 album *Mobile* (Nonesuch Records), Kotche released his 4th studio album *Adventureland* in 2013, featuring works Kotche has written for world-renowned ensembles including Kronos Quartet, Bang on a Can All-Stars and Eighth Blackbird. His compositions have been performed at venues as wide-ranging as Chicagoland's Ravinia, Carnegie's Zankel Hall and Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall in New York and Teatro Castro Alves in Salvador, Brazil.

In addition to his work as a composer and solo percussionist, Kotche is a member of the groundbreaking American rock band Wilco, with whom he has played since 2001. With Wilco, he has recorded the records *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* and *Kicking Television*, as well as the Grammy nominated *Sky Blue Sky*, *Wilco (The Album)* and *The Whole Love* and the Grammy-winning *A Ghost is Born*. In 2010, Kotche and his Wilco bandmates started their own music festival, Solid Sound, in collaboration with the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA). Kotche contributed a permanent sound installation to the museum's collection, created for the 2011 festival.

Beyond Wilco, Kotche records and performs regularly along with Darin Gray in the longtime rhythm duo On Fillmore. Together they have released four records, the most recent being

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Extended Vacation about which Pitchfork wrote, "These seven interwoven pieces delight... it reveals two focused, imaginative composers and performers." He is also a member of the trio Loose Fur, along with Jim O'Rourke and Jeff Tweedy, who have just recorded their third studio record. A frequent collaborator, Kotche has appeared on over 80 records to date, by artists as diverse as Andrew Bird, Edith Frost, Neil Finn and Radiohead's Phil Selway.

Kotche has twice appeared on the cover of *Modern Drummer* and once on the cover of *Percussive Notes*, the official publication of the Percussive Arts Society, of which Kotche is currently a board member. He resides in Chicago with his wife and two children.