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THIRD COAST BETWEEN
PERCUSSION BREATHS

The percussionist's vast garden of unfamiliar timbres creates many opportunities for getting lost in a sound, and we have long found that the visually engaging physical actions that create these sounds evoke ritual for many of our collaborators and audience members.



VAST
GARDEN OF
UNFAMILIAR
TIMBRES

NOTES

The general sense of chaos and information overload that has dominated the last few years has pushed us to explore these aspects of our artform even more than usual. Our everyday routines take on heightened meaning when everything else seems unstable, and meditating on a sound, just like meditating on one's breath, can clear the mind and create some space: space for processing, for connecting, for finding purpose, for simply existing.

Each of the pieces on this album has given us a chance to disappear into another world and emerge slightly changed. We have savored those moments of escape and are grateful for the opportunity to share these journeys with you.

MISSY MAZZOLI'S five-movement work, *Millennium Canticles*, imagines a group of people trying to recreate the rituals and stories of human life after a massive rapture or apocalypse. Despite the dark premise, the piece focuses on the hope and optimism of these survivors, exploring the human need to tell stories and create meaning through repeated actions such as chanting, praying, or playing drums. Members of this community participate in or reject the rituals, building things together, standing apart from the group, or developing the practices through experimentation and discovery.

Millennium Canticles charts a journey through the dramatic, surreal, and haunting, with a soundscape built from wooden planks, drums, trashy metal sounds, resonant metal pipes and tone chimes, a giant lion's roar, and a range of vocalizations expressing suspicion, anger, mourning, and hope.

Compositions by members of **THIRD COAST PERCUSSION** have always been an important part of the ensemble's repertoire. Since 2016, TCP has been co-composing works together as a quartet, a process that relies on the four musicians agreeing on an initial inspiration or framework before each begins creating ideas to bring to the group for workshops and revisions. *In Practice* began as a sound meditation, with the four ensemble members bringing their personal rituals to the table as source material in one way or another: a warm-up routine used to get the hands and mind going before diving into a practice session, an analogue synthesizer that serves as an escape from the constant stimulus of the touring musician's life, simple objects from the steady routines of daily life — coffee mugs, cereal bowls, electric toothbrushes. These elements laid a foundation from which the work developed its own sense of direction and purpose, with an atmosphere of meditation and balance always in the back of the quartet members' minds.

TYONDAI BRAXTON draws the mind into a trance-like state, infusing otherworldly acoustic and electronic timbres with an irresistible rhythmic drive. Braxton states that *Sunny X* is "predominantly set up as meditations on small phrases of non-pitched (or *partially* pitched) percussion and mercurial electronics." The patterns' steady repetitions and subtle variations draw the listener into the raw, gritty acoustic sounds in the piece: wooden planks, metal pipes and plates, and a variety of gongs and woodblocks. Fixed media, created by the composer using a modular synthesizer, add another layer of unfamiliarity, evoking a realm far outside our universe, or the deepest corners of the mind.

Chicagoan **AYANNA WOODS** composed *Triple Point* as part of TCP's Currents Creative Partnership. The title alludes to a paradoxical state of simultaneous balance and imbalance; the "triple point" of a pure substance is the temperature and pressure where it can be a solid, liquid, and gas in equilibrium. It is a point of both stability and transformation, with liquids bubbling into gas, rapidly freezing and then exploding and melting into liquid again. Woods' sound world is meditative and groovy at the same time, with bursts of energy and elements rising to the surface and dissolving again, while the environment also evolves slowly over time.

GEMMA PEACOCKE'S work for four players on two marimbas, *Death Wish*, has become a staple of TCP's repertoire, creating a powerful landscape of melancholy, personal devastation, and hope. Peacocke composed *Death Wish* in tribute to Hinewirangi Kohu-Morgan, a Māori artist, poet, and activist who lived and worked in Aotearoa (New Zealand). Kohu-Morgan was a survivor of sexual assault who spoke about an out-of-control spiraling of her life for many years and the "death wish" she developed during that time. In this piece, Peacocke evokes this spiraling and life journey:

In the piece I thought about the spooling and unspooling of energy and how we are all bound and driven by forces both within and beyond ourselves.

With the greatest of respect for Hinewirangi Kohu-Morgan who has used her life to create art and music and to help survivors of abuse and those who have perpetrated abuse.

I ōrea te tuātara ka patu ki waho. Aroha nui.

DEEPEST
CORNERS OF
THE MIND

INSPIRATIONAL
SENSE OF FUN AND
CURIOSITY

BIOS

THIRD COAST PERCUSSION (Sean Connors, Robert Dillon, Peter Martin, David Skidmore) is a Grammy Award-winning Chicago-based percussion quartet and Grammy-nominated composer collective. For over 15 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*). 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, Missy Mazzoli, Clarice Assad, Gemma Peacocke, Flutronic, Jlin, Tyondai Braxton, Augusta Read Thomas, Devonté Hynes, Georg Friedrich Haas, Donnacha Dennehy, Glenn Kotche, Christopher Cerrone, and David T. Little, among others, in addition to many of today’s leading up-and-coming composers through their Currents Creative Partnership program. Third Coast Percussion currently serves as ensemble-in-residence at Denison University.

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TYONDAI BRAXTON has been writing and performing music under his own name and collaboratively, under various group titles, since the mid-1990s. He is the former front man of the experimental rock band, Battles, whose debut album, *Mirrored*, was both a critical and commercial success. Braxton has composed commissioned pieces for ensembles such as the Bang on a Can All-Stars, Alarm Will Sound, Brooklyn Rider, and Third Coast Percussion. In 2012, he collaborated with Philip Glass during the ATP I’ll Be Your Mirror festival. He has also performed his orchestral work, *Central Market*, with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, London Sinfonietta, BBC Symphony Orchestra, and New York’s Wordless Music Orchestra. His 2015 Nonesuch debut, *HIVE1*, was praised by NPR Music for its “playfulness — the feeling that experimenting with sound is a joyful game.” Braxton followed that release with the 2016 five-song EP *Oranged Out*, proceeds from which supported the work of Everytown for Gun Safety, and released three new tracks — “Dia,” “Phonolydian,” and “Multiplay” — this past winter. Braxton was recently appointed to Princeton University’s Music Composition faculty as an Assistant Professor of Music. His album, *Telekinesis*, an 87-piece work for guitars, orchestra, choir + electronics, was released by Nonesuch in 2022. *Record Collector* called it “an astonishing tour de force that gives new meaning to the word ‘epic.’”

AYANNA WOODS is a Grammy-nominated performer, composer, and bandleader from Chicago. Her music explores the spaces between acoustic and electronic, traditional and esoteric, wildly improvisational and mathematically rigorous. A collaborator across genres and forms, her work spans new music, theater, film scoring, arranging, songwriting, and improvisation. She earned her B.A. in music from Yale University.

GEMMA PEACOCKE is a composer from Aotearoa (New Zealand). She is co-founder of the Kinds of Kings composer collective, which focuses on amplifying and advocating for under-heard voices in classical music. Her first album, *Waves & Lines*, which sets poems by Afghan women, was released on New Amsterdam in March 2019. Gemma has been commissioned by the Auckland Philharmonia, Christchurch Symphony Orchestra, Rochester Philharmonic, Third Coast Percussion, PUBLIQuartet, Bang on a Can, Rubiks Collective, Stroma, and Alarm Will Sound. She lives in Princeton with her family and her biggest fan, a standard poodle called Mila. She also spends as much time as possible in New Zealand.

EXPERIMENTING
WITH SOUND IS
A JOYFUL GAME

CREDITS

PRODUCERS

Elaine Martone, Colin Campbell, Tyondai Braxton (Braxton)

SESSION ENGINEERS

Bill Maylone, Dan Nichols, Mark Alletag, Jonathan Lackey

EDITING AND MIXING

Bill Maylone, Tyondai Braxton (Braxton), Seth Manchester (Braxton)

MASTERING ENGINEER

Joe Lambert

RECORDED May 21, 2021 (Peacocke); November 16–17, 2021 (Braxton); December 14–16, 2022 (Mazzoli, Third Coast Percussion, Woods). All music was recorded at Chicago Recording Company.

ARTWORK

Contemplation © 2022
Zelene Jiang Schlosberg

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Bark Design Chicago

LINER NOTES

Robert Dillon, Rebecca McDaniel, and David Skidmore, with contributions by Tyondai Braxton, Missy Mazzoli, Gemma Peacocke, and Ayanna Woods

PUBLISHERS

Millennium Canticles © 2022 by G. Schirmer, Inc. (ASCAP)

In Practice © 2022 Third Coast Percussion Publications (ASCAP)

Sunny X © 2020 Tyondai Braxton Music (BMI)

Triple Point © 2018 Ayanna Woods LLC (ASCAP)

Death Wish © 2017 by Oronoa (ASCAP)

Missy Mazzoli’s *Millennium Canticles* was commissioned by Third Coast Percussion with lead support from Elizabeth and Justus Schlichting, and additional support from Bruce Oltman, the Third Coast Percussion New Works Fund, and the Maxine and Stuart Frankel Foundation.

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Sunny X was commissioned for Third Coast Percussion by the Sewanee Music Festival, George Mason University, and Carnegie Hall, with additional support from Third Coast Percussion’s New Works Fund.

MISSY MAZZOLI
MILLENNIUM CANTICLES
(15:19)

- 1 Part 1: Famous Disaster Psalm (2:00)
- 2 Part 2: The Doubter's Litany (2:33)
- 3 Part 3: Bloodied Bells (6:12)
- 4 Part 4: Choir of the Holy Locusts (2:47)
- 5 Part 5: Survival Psalm (1:47)

THIRD COAST PERCUSSION
(SEAN CONNORS, ROBERT DILLON,
PETER MARTIN, DAVID SKIDMORE)
IN PRACTICE (17:06)

- 6 Part I (9:00)
- 7 Part II (8:06)

TYONDAI BRAXTON

- 8 *Sunny X* (11:15)

AYANNA WOODS

- 9 *Triple Point* (5:11)

GEMMA PEACOCKE

- 10 *Death Wish* (9:43)

TT: (58:58)

ALL WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

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