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SONIC ILLINOIS
EIGHTH BLACKBIRD AND THIRD COAST PERCUSSION:
STEVE REICH'S *MUSIC FOR 18 MUSICIANS*

Saturday, February 16, 2019, at 7:30pm
Foellinger Great Hall

PROGRAM

SONIC ILLINOIS

**EIGHTH BLACKBIRD AND THIRD COAST PERCUSSION:
STEVE REICH'S *MUSIC FOR 18 MUSICIANS***

EIGHTH BLACKBIRD

Nathalie Joachim, flutes and voice

Michael J. Maccaferri, clarinets

Yvonne Lam, violin

Nick Photinos, cello

Matthew Duvall, percussion

Lisa Kaplan, piano

THIRD COAST PERCUSSION

Sean Connors, percussion

Robert Dillon, percussion

Peter Martin, percussion

David Skidmore, percussion

Also featuring

Kayleigh Butcher, voice

Ian Ding, percussion

Zachary Good, clarinets

Adam Marks, piano

Alex Monroe, percussion and piano

Elizabeth Pearse, voice

Justin Peters, percussion

Daniel Schlosberg, piano

Carrie Henneman Shaw, voice

Paul Coleman, audio engineer

Steve Reich
(b. 1936)

Music for 18 Musicians (1976)

Pulses
Section I
Section II
Section IIIA
Section IIIB
Section IV
Section V
Section VI
Section VII
Section VIII
Section IX
Section X
Section XI
Pulses

This performance will be presented with no intermission.

Through Sonic Illinois, Krannert Center and the School of Music collaboratively explore the tremendous diversity of today's vital contemporary music scene—a revival of the spirit of the University of Illinois Festival of Contemporary Arts, which was a major cultural force in the mid-20th century. Sonic Illinois, a month-long celebration of new music, honors innovative creators who challenge convention, forge pathways, and expand the creative process.

Eighth Blackbird is ensemble-in-residence at the University of Richmond (Virginia). Eighth Blackbird is managed by David Lieberman/Artists Representatives. Nathalie Joachim is a Burkart Flutes & Piccolos artist. Michael J. Maccaferri is a D'Addario Woodwinds artist. Matthew Duvall proudly endorses Pearl drums and Adams Musical Instruments, Vic Firth sticks and mallets, Zildjian cymbals, and Black Swamp Percussion accessories. Lisa Kaplan is a Steinway artist.

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

*This performance is made possible by arrangements with:
David Lieberman/Artists Representatives
PO Box 10368, Newport Beach, CA 92658
www.dlartists.com*

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PROGRAM NOTES

STEVE REICH

Born October 3, 1936, in New York City, New York
Music for 18 Musicians

While many composers of the 20th century were crafting music driven by complex theoretical and numerical systems, American composer Steve Reich was determined to create music that progressed through clearly audible processes. Often based on repeating musical cells that evolve gradually yet perceptibly over time, Reich's process-based music is credited as one of the pillars of the musical style dubbed "minimalism," a label that applies to some of his works—particularly his early music—more appropriately than others. Reich borrows rhythms from West African drumming and harmonies from bebop, with a variety of other musical influences revealing themselves over the years, including Balinese Gamelan, chanting of Hebrew scripture, and medieval organum.

Much of Steve Reich's music was written for his own ensemble, Steve Reich and Musicians, founded in 1966. For years, these were the only performers of Reich's music, and some of Reich's works were not even written down until this ensemble had toured them extensively, with the performers playing for years from memory or shorthand parts made by the composer. For instance, the score for *Music for 18 Musicians* was created from these shorthand parts and transcribed recordings by composer Marc Mellits in 1997, over 20 years after the work's premiere.

Now in his 83rd year, Reich has received an endless array of prizes and awards, including the 2009 Pulitzer Prize in Music, and has been praised as ". . . the most original musical thinker of our time" (*The New Yorker*) and ". . . among the great composers of the century" (*The New York Times*). His music is performed widely across the world by professional ensembles and is studied in conservatories as standard repertoire. In addition to shaping the direction of concert music, his musical influence has seeped into rock, jazz, and electronica.

Both Third Coast Percussion and Eighth Blackbird have performed Reich's music extensively over the years. Third Coast Percussion released a full album of Reich's music in early 2016, which won a Grammy for Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance, and an accompanying mobile app. The work for which Reich was awarded the Pulitzer Prize was his *Double Sextet*, commissioned by Eighth Blackbird. Their recording of the work was released in 2010.

Music for 18 Musicians takes Reich's musical concepts to their largest and most seamless scale, creating an immersive, hour-long experience. The musical forces include violin, cello, two clarinets (doubling bass clarinet), four women's voices, four pianos, three marimbas, two xylophones, vibraphone, and maracas.

The work is built around a series of 11 harmonies, presented at the "Pulses" that begin and end the piece. In between, each of the harmonies is built into its own section, episodes each suffused with subtly different musical characters: Section III hums with newly minted energy and life; Section V enacts a series of competitive piano duels; Section VI careens towards an ecstatic,

maracas-driven climax; Section XI wrenches us into unexpected darkness.

Within this undulating landscape, distinct parts of the musical machine become clear: a steady interlocking pulse, set up by the marimbas and pianos and later moving up into the xylophones, underlies the entire journey; waves from the clarinets, strings, and voices emerge from the texture and vanish back into it in the space of one long breath; melodic figures are built up one note at a time, often revealing identical copies of the same material echoing in interlocking canons.

The score is a loose alignment of overlapping events, without strict numbers of repeats. Directing traffic is the lone vibraphone, positioned in the middle of the ensemble. Serving a role similar to the lead drummer in West African music, the vibraphone signals changes from one section to the next, as well as within each section, with distinct calls that are heard over the sea of repeating patterns.

Often considered Reich's greatest work, *Music for 18 Musicians* is a joyful celebration of communal music-making. Performers often lose their sense of individual identity within the collective sound, and listeners emerge at the end of an hour of music, surprised that it has passed so quickly.

Duration: approximately 65 minutes

EIGHTH BLACKBIRD

Nathalie Joachim, flutes
Michael Maccaferri, clarinets
Yvonne Lam, violin
Nick Photinos, cello
Matthew Duvall, percussion
Lisa Kaplan, piano

Eighth Blackbird, hailed as “one of the smartest, most dynamic contemporary classical ensembles on the planet” (*Chicago Tribune*), began in 1996 as a group of six entrepreneurial Oberlin Conservatory students and quickly became “a brand-name defined by adventure, vibrancy and quality” (*Detroit Free Press*). Over the course of more than two decades, Eighth Blackbird has continually pushed at the edges of what it means to be a contemporary chamber ensemble, presenting distinct programs in Chicago, nationally, and internationally, reaching audiences totaling tens of thousands. The sextet has commissioned and premiered hundreds of works by composers both established and emerging, and have perpetuated the creation of music with profound impact, such as Steve Reich’s *Double Sextet*, which went on to win the 2009 Pulitzer Prize. The ensemble’s extensive recording history, primarily with Chicago’s Cedille Records, has produced more than a dozen acclaimed albums and four Grammy Awards for Best Small Ensemble/Chamber Music Performance, most recently in 2016 for *Filament*. Longstanding collaborative relationships have led to performances with some of the most well-regarded classical artists of today from heralded performers like Dawn Upshaw and Jeremy Denk, to seminal composers like Philip Glass and Nico Muhly. In recent projects, Eighth Blackbird has joined forces with composers and performers

who defy the persistent distinction between classical and nonclassical music, including works by The National’s Bryce Dessner and Arcade Fire’s Richard Reed Perry, and performances with Justin Vernon of Bon Iver, My Brightest Diamond frontwoman Shara Nova, Will Oldham aka Bonnie “Prince” Billy and Iarla Ó Lionáird of The Gloaming, among others.

Eighth Blackbird first gained wide recognition in 1998 as winners of the Concert Artists Guild Competition. Since 2000, the ensemble has called Chicago home, and has been committed to serving as both importer and exporter of world class artistic experiences to and from Chicago. A recent year-long pioneering residency at the Museum of Contemporary Art-Chicago, during which the ensemble served as a living installation with open rehearsals, performances, guest artists, and public talks, exemplified their stature as community influencers. Receiving the prestigious MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions, Chamber Music America’s inaugural Visionary Award, and being named Musical America’s 2017 Ensemble of the Year have supported Eighth Blackbird’s position as a catalyst for innovation in the new music ecosystem of Chicago and beyond.

Eighth Blackbird’s mission—moving music forward through innovative performance, advocating for new music by living composers, and creating a legacy of guiding an emerging generation of musicians—extends beyond recording and touring to curation and education. The ensemble served as music director of the 2009 Ojai Music Festival, has held residencies at the Curtis Institute of Music and at the University of Chicago, and holds an ongoing Ensemble-in-

Residence position at the University of Richmond. In 2017, Eighth Blackbird launched its boldest initiative yet with the creation of Blackbird Creative Laboratory, an inclusive, two-week summer workshop and performance festival for performers and composers in Ojai, California.

The members of Eighth Blackbird hail from the Great Lakes, Keystone, Golden, Empire, and Bay states. The name “Eighth Blackbird” derives from the eighth stanza of Wallace Stevens’s evocative, imagistic poem, *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird*:

I know noble accents
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;
But I know, too,
That the blackbird is involved
In what I know.

THIRD COAST PERCUSSION

Sean Connors, percussion
Robert Dillon, percussion
Peter Martin, percussion
David Skidmore, percussion

Third Coast Percussion is a Grammy Award-winning, artist-run quartet of classically trained percussionists hailing from the great city of Chicago. For over 10 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 33 of the 50 states plus Canada, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Poland, and venues ranging from concert halls at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York City) and De Doelen (Rotterdam, Netherlands) to clubs and alternative

performance spaces such as New York's Le Poisson Rouge and the National Gallery's West Garden Court (Washington, DC).

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 Philip Glass, Devonté Hynes, Donnacha Dennehy, Glenn Kotche, Lei Liang, Gavin Bryars, Christopher Cerrone, Marcos Balter, 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 five full-length albums, three extended plays (EPs), and a number of appearances on other releases. The quartet has put its stamp on iconic percussion works by John Cage, Steve Reich, and Philippe Manoury, 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 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, the Chicago Philharmonic, 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 The People's Music School, Urban Gateways, 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 (@ThirdCoastPercussion), and Instagram (@ThirdCoastPercussion). Third Coast Percussion is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization.