"Hear it Together" hosted by Scott Speck

Sonorous Earth with special guest Augusta Read Thomas

Sunday, October 04 2020, 4:00pm
Virtual Event

Scott Speck host
Augusta Read Thomas co-host
Ayriole Frost guest speaker
Sean Connors guest speaker
Shift Youth Orchestra NEXT! performers

SONOROUS EARTH ........................................ AUGUSTA READ THOMAS (b. 1964)
for percussion quartet and orchestra

I. Invocation – Pulse Radiance Homage to Olivier Messiaen and Igor Stravinsky
II. Prayer – Star Dust Orbits Homage to Luciano Berio and Pierre Boulez
III. Mantra – Ceremonial Time Shapes – Homage to Lou Harrison and György Ligeti
IV. Reverie Carillon – Crystal Lattice Homage to Edgard Varèse, Harry Partch and John Cage

Event time approximately 1 hour 15 minutes

Commissioned by Chicago Philharmonic; supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts, and an award from the Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation. The Chicago Philharmonic is partially supported by a CityArts Grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events.

Co-commissioned by the Eugene Symphony Association, with generous support of the Nils and Jewel Hult Foundation - Arts Fund of the Oregon Community Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Sonorous Earth is supported by New Music USA, made possible by and annual program support and/or endowment gifts from Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Mary Flaher Cary Charitable Trust, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Francis Goelet Charitable Lead Trusts, Anonymous.

Chicago Philharmonic 2020-2021 Season Sponsors
SONOROUS EARTH (2017)
Augusta Read Thomas (b. 1964)

Augusta Read Thomas’ Sonorous Earth was co-commissioned by The Chicago Philharmonic Society and The Eugene Symphony Association. The work is dedicated to its commissioners and the artists for whom it was conceived, the four gentlemen of Third Coast Percussion. Sonorous Earth is written in four movements, each of which is an “homage” to two or more giants of twentieth- and twenty-first-century composition, all of whom wrote extensively for percussion. This performance marks its world premiere. The concerto lasts approximately 30 minutes and there is no pause between the third and fourth movement.

Thomas provides the following thoughts for the work: “Sonorous Earth 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 bell sounds. Scored for four percussionists playing bells from a wide variety of cultures and historical periods, Sonorous Earth can be heard and imagined as a United-Nations-of-Resonances.

“Everything that we are made of, everything that we know and love, is made from the stars. We (like 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. More than three hundred pieces of metal are incorporated into the instrumentation of Sonorous Earth.”

“Probing into bells’ rich meanings and characteristics as carriers of history, ethnicity, 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, bells, of numerous shapes, sizes, types, decorative patterns, weights, functions, and cultural connotations, enrapture and inspire.”

Bells are central to Augusta’s music. For over 25 years, in nearly 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.
The members of Third Coast Percussion shared these descriptions of the work’s four movements:

“The majestic and resonant INVOCATION unfolds with a bright energy that reveals the broad sonic palette that these bells provide, as well as Augusta Read Thomas’s distinct compositional voice. Agile musical figures dart gracefully across a variety of bells and other resonant metals, suspended from racks and arranged on tables, as well as more standard metal keyboard percussion instruments: glockenspiel, vibraphone, and crotales. Inspired by the vibrations and callings of the bells, the orchestra responds sometimes with sympathetic accompaniment, sometimes with an intense drive of its own. Throughout the kaleidoscopic journey of this first movement (the longest of the four), twisting musical figures intertwine with a light playfulness, converging at moments of punctuation or emphatic unison.

“In the poetic and dreamy second movement, PRAYER, our quartet convenes around 26 tuned Rin (Japanese prayer bowls) and 12 crotales. The singing sonority of these meditative instruments is further enriched by the orchestra, which extends and transforms the resonance of the bells. This movement unfolds a web of long, silky sonic threads, meticulously crafted but giving the sense of floating freely outside of time. The two-note ‘fanfare’ figure, which appears in places throughout, adds a sparkle to the otherwise gentle glow of this movement.

“In contrast to the dramatic INVOCATION and meditative PRAYER, the third movement, MANTRA, has a wholly different sensibility, imbued with the enchanting finesse of Indonesian Gamelan. Our distinctive color palette of 18 bronze spinning Burma Bells (Kyeezes), 8 gongs, and 10 Indian Noah bells, is answered with evocative orchestral colors including string pizzicati, harp harmonics, woodwind solos (with a sizable piccolo solo), radiant orchestral percussion, and sensitive brass playing. This ever-transforming movement starts very delicately and gradually crescendos from gentle plucked sounds to vibrant elaborations, which lead directly, without pause, into the final movement.

“Every bell on stage is struck in REVERIE CARILLON. We begin at the Burma Bells and work our way through all the previous playing positions in a purposeful choreography. Vivid, clangorous, brassy, and blazing, REVERIE CARILLON embraces a variety of intrepid and enthusiastic spirits while never losing its sense of whimsy and exuberance. The briefest of the four movements, it is continually fast-paced and dynamic.

“This work embodies everything that has made Augusta Read Thomas one of our favorite collaborators over the years: an ambitious enthusiasm, precise attention to detail, thoughtful sense of
craft, and deep understanding of sonic colors. For us, this work represents a unique contribution to both the orchestral and percussion ensemble repertoire.”

"This is music that is always in motion, as if coming perpetually out of a magician’s hat. It leads but doesn’t direct, and is playful and subtle, dancing on light feet. It is music that conjures.” - Daniel Asia, The Huffington Post

SCOTT SPECK  
Artistic Director and Principal Conductor  

“Scott Speck is as energetic as he is talented, with a charismatic personality that leaps over the footlights.” - The Baltimore Sun

Scott Speck was named Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of Chicago Philharmonic in June of 2013 and has been Music Director of the Joffrey Ballet since 2010. His concerts with the Moscow RTV Symphony Orchestra in Tchaikovsky Hall garnered unanimous praise. His gala performances with Yo-Yo Ma, Itzhak Perlman, Renée Fleming, Joshua Bell, Midori, Evelyn Glennie, and Olga Kern have highlighted his recent and current seasons as Music Director of the Mobile Symphony. This season he also collaborates intensively with Carnegie Hall for the tenth time as Music Director of the West Michigan Symphony. He was invited to the White House as former Music Director of the Washington Ballet.

In past seasons Scott Speck has conducted at New York's Lincoln Center, London’s Royal Opera House at Covent Garden, the Paris Opera, Chicago’s Symphony Center, Washington’s Kennedy Center, San Francisco’s War Memorial Opera House, and the Los Angeles Music Center. He has led numerous performances with the great symphony orchestras around the world.

He is also the co-author of three of the world’s bestselling books on classical music for a popular audience, Classical Music for Dummies, Opera for Dummies and Ballet for Dummies, and Ballet for Dummies. These books have been translated into twenty languages and are available around the world.

Scott Speck has been a regular commentator on National Public Radio, the BBC, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, and Voice of Russia, broadcast throughout the world. He has been featured in TED talks and at the Aspen Ideas Festival. His writing has been featured in numerous magazines and journals.
Scott Speck can be reached at scottspeck.org, on Twitter @scottspeck1, and at facebook.com/ConductorScottSpeck.

AYRIOLE FROST

Ayriole Frost is an active composer, performer, and teacher. She co-founded and currently serves as the Executive Director of Shift:Englewood, a youth development program in Chicago. She is adjunct faculty at North Park University and a sought-after workshop leader for creative music projects around the country. Frost received her Bachelor of Music in Composition from Ball State University, where she studied composition, viola, and voice. She holds a Master of Music in Composition and teaching certification from Carnegie Mellon University. Frost completed the esteemed Sistema Fellows Program at New England Conservatory in 2014. She is a 3Arts Awardee and Rauschenberg Residency recipient.

SHIFT YOUTH ORCHESTRA

Shift:Englewood, founded in 2014, is a youth development organization in the Greater Englewood neighborhoods of Chicago whose mission is to promote social and personal growth through intensive music and leadership training. We work with young people ages 8-18 in schools in Greater Englewood, as well as provide college and young professional training to musicians interested in the intersection of music and social justice. Primarily an after school program, we have also begun filling a funding gap in Greater Englewood by providing quality music residencies during school. Our music programs are unique in that we focus on student voice, and foster creativity through both skills development and collective composition.
The music of Augusta Read Thomas (b. 1964 in New York) is nuanced, majestic, elegant, capricious, lyrical, and colorful — “it is boldly considered music that celebrates the sound of the instruments and reaffirms the vitality of orchestral music” (Philadelphia Inquirer).

A composer featured on a Grammy-winning CD by Chanticleer and Pulitzer Prize finalist, Thomas’ impressive body of works “embodies unbridled passion and fierce poetry” (American Academy of Arts and Letters). The New Yorker magazine called her “a true virtuoso composer.” Championed by such luminaries as Barenboim, Rostropovich, Boulez, Eschenbach, Salonen, Maazel, Ozawa, and Knussen, she rose early to the top of her profession. The American Academy of Arts and Letters described Thomas as “one of the most recognizable and widely loved figures in American Music.”

She is a University Professor of Composition in Music and the College at The University of Chicago. Thomas was the longest-serving Mead Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for conductors Daniel Barenboim and Pierre Boulez (1997-2006). This residency culminated in the premiere of Astral Canticle, one of two finalists for the 2007 Pulitzer Prize in Music. During her residency, Thomas not only premiered nine commissioned orchestral works but was also central in establishing the thriving MusicNOW series, through which she commissioned and programmed the work of many living composers. For the 2017-2018 concert season, Thomas was the Composer-in-Residence with the Eugene Symphony Orchestra, while Francesco Lecce-Chong served as Music Director and Scott Freck as Executive Director. Thomas was MUSICALIVE Composer-in-Residence with the New Haven Symphony, a national residency program of The League of American Orchestras and Meet the Composer.

Thomas won the Ernst von Siemens Music Prize, among many other coveted awards. She is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Thomas was named the 2016 Chicagoan of the Year.

In 2016, Augusta Read Thomas founded the University of Chicago’s Center for Contemporary Composition, which is a dynamic, collaborative, and interdisciplinary environment for the creation, performance and study of new music and for the advancement of the careers of emerging and established composers, performers, and scholars. Distinguished by its formation within an uncompromising, relentlessly searching, and ceaselessly innovative scholarly environment, which
celebrates excellence and presents new possibilities for intellectual dialogue, the Center comprises ten integrated entities: annual concert series featuring the Grossman Ensemble, CHIME, visiting ensembles, distinguished guest composers, performances, recordings, research, student-led projects, workshops and postdoctoral fellowships.

SEAN CONNORS

Sean Connors is an Ensemble Member and Technical Director of Third Coast Percussion. He has performed with Amphion Percussion, the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, eighth blackbird, the International Contemporary Ensemble, Signal, and Metropolis Ensemble, and he was the percussionist for 2 summers with the prestigious Aspen Music Festival Contemporary Ensemble.

As an educator, Sean served for 2 years as an assistant professor of percussion at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point and taught elementary school and middle school music in the Chicago suburbs. Sean holds a Bachelor of Music degree from the Eastman School of Music, a Master of Music degree from Northwestern University and is currently pursuing a Doctor of Music degree from the Eastman School of Music.

THIRD COAST PERCUSSION

Founded in 2005, 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.
Chicago Philharmonic Original Recording

*Sonorous Earth* (World Premiere)

Sunday, November 12 2017, 3:00pm
Harris Theater, Chicago

**Scott Speck** conductor
**Third Coast Percussion**
**Augusta Read Thomas** composer

**Violin**
David Perry, Concertmaster
Katie Brauer, Assistant Concertmaster
Mathias Tacke, Principal Second Violin
Jennifer Cappelli
Injoo Choi
Daniela Folker
Karin Andreassen Gambell
Renée-Paule Gauthier
Sheila Hanford
Carmen Kassinger
Helen Kim
Kjersti Nostbakken
Laura Park Chen
Dmitri Pogorelov
Irene Radetzky
James Patrick Rafferty
Rika Seko
Azusa Tashiro

**Cello**
Barbara Haffner, Principal
Katinka Kleijn
Elizabeth Anderson
Margaret Daly
Larry Glazier
Wei Liu Denton

**Bass**
Collins Trier, Principal
Andrew Anderson
Jeremy Attanaseo
Ian Hallas

**Viola**
Melissa Trier Kirk, Principal
Patrick Brennan
Karl Davies
Amy Hess
Claudia Lasareff-Mironoff
Benton Wedge

**Flute**
John Thorne, Principal
Janice MacDonald

**Piccolo**
Karin Ursin

**Oboe**
Anne Bach, Principal
Erica Anderson

**Clarinet**
Linda Baker, Principal
Gene Collerd

**Bass Clarinet**
Gene Collerd

**Bassoon**
Lewis Kirk, Principal
Preman Tilson

**Horn**
Neil Kimel, Principal
Fritz Foss

**Trumpet**
William Denton, Principal
Channing Philbrick
David Inmon, Assistant

**Trombone**
Reed Capshaw, Principal

**Bass Trombone**
Graeme Mutchler

**Percussion**
Joel Cohen, Principal
Robert Everson
Richard Janicki

**Harp**
Alison Attar, Principal

**Music Librarian**
Danielle Ray

**Personnel Manager**
Terrell Pierce