

3-25-2009

# Glenn Kotche, percussion, with eighth blackbird

Department of Music, University of Richmond

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# Modlin Center for the Arts

Wednesday • March 25, 2009 • 7:30 p.m.  
Camp Concert Hall

## Glenn Kotche *percussion*

### eighth blackbird

Tim Munro, <i>flutes</i>	Michael J. Maccaferri, <i>clarinets</i>
Matt Albert, <i>violin and viola</i>	Nicholas Photinos, <i>cello</i>
Matthew Duvall, <i>percussion</i>	Lisa Kaplan, <i>piano</i>

Steve Reich	<b>Clapping Music</b> (1972)
Reich • Glenn Kotche, <i>arr.</i>	<b>Music for Pieces of Wood</b> (1973)
Lynn/West/Oyewole/Hassan/Moore • Kotche, <i>arr.</i>	<b>The Corner</b> (2007)
Glenn Kotche	<b>Monkey Chant</b> (2004), film: Nathaniel Murphy
Missy Mazzoli	<b>Still Life with Avalanche*</b> (2008) <i>World premiere</i>

intermission

Kotche	<b>Projections of (what) Might</b> (2005)
Kotche	<b>Individual Trains</b> (2005)
Kotche	<b>Double Fantasy</b> (2008)
Louis Andriessen	<b>Worker's Union</b> (1975)

\**Still Life with Avalanche* was commissioned by eighth blackbird through the generous support of Frederica and James R. Rosenfield, Kathleen Johnson and Paul Browning, Kirk Johnson and William Johnson.

*This performance is sponsored in part by the Department of Music.*

*Join the artists in the performance hall for a Talk Back session following tonight's event.*

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The Modlin Center for the Arts thanks Style Weekly for media sponsorship of the 2008-2009 season.

## Glenn Kotche



Photo: Michael Wilson

Heralded by *The Chicago Tribune* for his “unfailing taste, technique and discipline,” percussionist Glenn Kotche has explored the creative potential of rhythm and space in his performances and compositions for the past 18 years. Born in 1970 in Roselle, Illinois, Kotche graduated *summa cum laude* with a bachelor’s degree in music performance from the prestigious University of Kentucky where he studied with James Campbell.

Kotche’s collaborations with groups and ensembles have resulted in more than 80 albums to date, including the solo recordings *Introducing* and *Next*. His third solo effort *Mobile* was released in 2006 on the Nonesuch label. Kotche appeared on the cover of the August 2007 issue of *Modern Drummer* magazine and is featured in the 2006 *Modern Drummer Festival* DVD.

Kotche joined the rock band Wilco in 2001. Since that time, Wilco’s accomplishments include the gold-selling album *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, the Grammy-winning *A Ghost Is Born* and the live double recording *Kicking Television*. The band’s most recent release

*Sky Blue Sky* ranked as one of the “U.S. Top 5” on the *Billboard*. The CD, nominated for a Grammy in the “Best Rock Album” category, was declared by the *Boston Phoenix* to be “an outright masterpiece.”

Beyond Wilco, Kotche records and performs regularly with the jazz experimental duo On Fillmore. Their latest recording *Sleeps with Fishes* (Drag City, 2003 and Columbia Music Entertainment, 2007) earned the ensemble an appearance at the prestigious 2005 Percussion Pan Festival in Rio de Janeiro and Salvador, Brazil. On Fillmore has collaborated with the Brazilian trio Moreno Veloso+2 at Chicago’s Museum of Contemporary Art and created the score for the cult film *S&MAN*. Kotche is also a member—with Jim O’Rourke and Jeff Tweedy—of the trio Loose Fur.

Commissioned by the Kronos Quartet, Kotche composed the 25-minute, seven-movement work *Anomaly* which premiered at the San Francisco Jazz Festival in 2007.

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## Glenn Kotche (continued)

In 2008, Kotche's *Snap*—commissioned for the Bang on a Can All-Stars—received its world premiere at the University of North Carolina's Memorial Hall.

On March 3, 2009, Kotche appeared with the Bang on a Can All-Stars in a sold-out concert at Alice Tully Hall. His performance of *Mobile* was described by *The New York Times* as "bright-edged [and] vigorously syncopated."

Kotche and eighth blackbird recently joined forces, to audience and critical acclaim, at Chicago's Harris Theater in

November of 2008. The *Chicago Sun-Times* prefaced its review with "Glenn Kotche is not your average rock-and-roll percussionist. Eighth blackbird is not your average classical music sextet. Put the two together, and the result is a vastly above-average night in the concert hall" and went on to describe the collaboration as a union of "kindred musical souls" whose performances "ranged from subtle lyricism to raw ferocity."

## Talk Back

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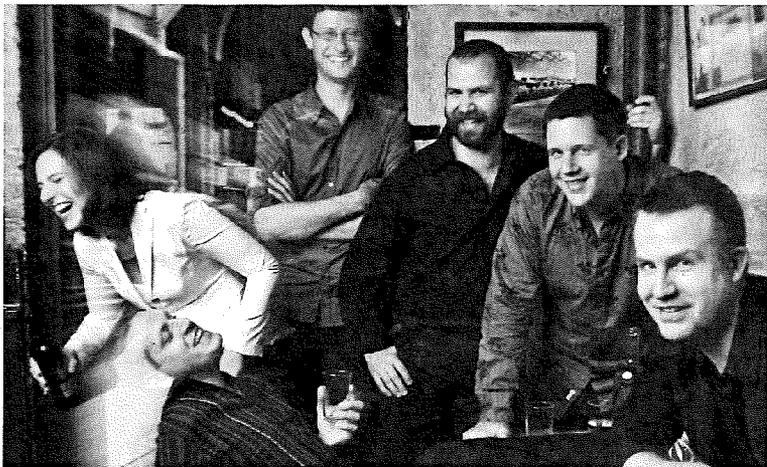
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## eighth blackbird

Photo: Luke Ratray



Described by *The New Yorker* as “friendly, unpretentious, idealistic and highly skilled,” eighth blackbird promises —and delivers—provocative and engaging performances to its ever-growing audience. Combining bracing virtuosity with a refreshing panache, the sextet debunks the myth that today’s serious music is composed solely for those steeped in an academic lexicon. Its performances and recordings sparkle with wit and pound with energy. New fans become drawn into eighth blackbird’s evolving soundworld of new music—a realm that the group inhabits and explores with comfort, conviction and infectious enthusiasm. *The New York Times* noted “eighth blackbird’s performances are the picture of polish and precision and they seem to be thoroughly engaged...by music in a broad range of contemporary styles.”

In 2008, the group’s *strange imaginary animals* was awarded the Grammy for “Best Chamber Music Performance.” Its producer Judith Sherman received a Grammy for “Best Producer of the Year” in the classical category.

Profiled in *The New York Times* and NPR’s *All Things Considered*, the sextet has also been featured on Bloomberg TV’s *Muse*, *CBS News Sunday Morning*, *St. Paul Sunday*, *Weekend America* and *The Next Big Thing*, among others. The group is in residence at the University of Richmond and the University of Chicago.

Highlights of the current season have included collaborations and performances with conservatory students from Oberlin and Los Angeles’s Colburn School; debuts in the U.K. (Liverpool), Rotterdam and Australia (Melbourne); “hometown” concerts at Chicago’s Harris Theater with this evening’s percussionist Glenn Kotche and the Hilliard Ensemble; and appearances at the Modlin Center for the Arts.

This June, the ensemble takes the reins as collective Music Director of the famed Ojai Music Festival. Soon afterwards, eighth blackbird makes its debut at the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival where it will perform a new work, written in its honor, by Mark-Anthony Turnage.

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## eighth blackbird (continued)

The sextet has appeared in Canada, Mexico, the Netherlands and South Korea; and the major concert venues in North America.

Performances include those at Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, the Metropolitan Museum, Kennedy Center, Library of Congress, Cleveland Museum of Art and La Jolla Chamber Music Society; and has been concert soloist with the Utah Symphony and the American Composers Orchestra. During the summers, the group has appeared several times at Cincinnati's Music X, the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival, Caramoor International Music Festival and Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, also performing at Tanglewood, Ojai, New York's 20<sup>th</sup> annual Bang on a Can Marathon and Bravo! Vail.

Since its founding in 1996, eighth blackbird has actively commissioned and recorded new works from such eminent composers as Steve Reich, George Perle, Frederic Rzewski and Joseph Schwantner and has commissioned groundbreaking works from a younger generation (Jennifer Higdon, Stephen Hartke, Derek Bermel, David Schober, Daniel Kellogg and Carlos Sánchez-Gutiérrez). The group was honored in 2007 with the American Music Center's Trailblazer Award and a Meet The Composer Award.

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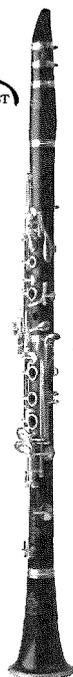
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## Program Notes

### **Steve Reich • *Clapping Music* (1972)**

Steve Reich (b. 1936) has been described as “our greatest living composer” (*The New York Times*), “America’s greatest living composer.” (*The Village Voice*) and “the most original musical thinker of our time” (*The New Yorker*). From his early taped speech pieces *It’s Gonna Rain* (1965) and *Come Out* (1966) to his collaboration with video artist Beryl Korot, the digital video opera *Three Tales* (2002), Reich has pursued a creative path that embraces not only aspects of Western classical music, but the structures, harmonies and rhythms of non-Western and American vernacular music, particularly jazz. He has won numerous honors, including several Grammy Awards and his music has been commissioned, performed and recorded by orchestras and ensembles around the world. For his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday year (2006), concerts were presented throughout Europe, North America and Asia and Nonesuch Records released its second box set of Reich’s works, *Phases: A Nonesuch Retrospective*, a five-CD collection spanning the 20 years of his time on the label.

*Clapping Music* was originally written for two performers. Reich wanted to “create a piece of music that needed no instruments beyond the human body” using a simplified form of his “phasing technique” (in which the same gesture is played by two performers in steady but not identical tempo, so that the two gradually shift out of unison). In the work, one performer claps a basic rhythm for the entirety of the piece, while the other claps the same pattern shifts ahead by one eighth note every few repetitions. The two performers

continue this until the second performer has shifted 12 eighth notes and the two are in unison once again.

### **Steve Reich/Glenn Kotche, arr. • *Music for Pieces of Wood* (1973)**

*Music for Pieces of Wood* came out of the desire to make music with the simplest instruments possible—in this case claves (a wooden percussion instrument)—played by five performers. Reich writes: “The rhythmic structure is based entirely on the process of rhythmic buildups (the gradual substitution of beats for rests) and is in three sections of decreasing pattern length: 6/4, 4/4 and 3/4.” Bang on Can All-Stars percussionist David Cossin arranged the piece for himself and me to play as a drum duo. Inspired by his arrangement, I created a solo version in which the steady pulse of the original is heard as a loop on piano board (a type of thumb piano) and the other parts are played live on amplified drums (with effects) and hi-hat.

—Glenn Kotche

### **Lynn, West, Oyewole, Hassan, Moore/ Kotche, arr. • *The Corner* (2007)**

*The Corner* is an arrangement for solo piano of a song from the recording *Be* by Chicago rapper Common. This version incorporates rhythmic and melodic hooks from the track and mirrors the contour of the vocal lines. Departures have been taken to create a new formal structure, which better utilizes the tonal possibilities of the piano and focuses on the use of space.

—Glenn Kotche

—continued

## Program Notes

### **Glenn Kotche • *Monkey Chant* (2004)**

*Monkey Chant* is a loose retelling of the monkey army's battle story from the Hindu epic tale, the *Ramayana*. My version follows the narrative of this story, often attempting a literal representation of certain parts (such as some character interactions) and at other times metaphorically representing events (e.g. in the final battle between Rama and Ravana). Specific drum kit instruments are assigned to various roles in the drama. I use percussive elements from several recorded versions of the *Kecak* or "Monkey Chant" (the Balinese performance artwork that is set to the *Ramayana*). For example, the cricket boxes are directly inspired by insects heard in recordings of early performances. The accompanying film was created by artist Nathaniel Murphy with assistance from Amanda Beyer and Brian Henry.

—Glenn Kotche

### **Missy Mazzoli • *Still Life with Avalanche* (2008)**

Missy Mazzoli was born in 1980 in Pennsylvania and studied composition at the Yale School of Music, Boston University and the Royal Conservatory of the Hague. Mazzoli's music has been heard throughout the world in performances by the South Carolina Philharmonic, the Minnesota Orchestra, the Spokane Symphony, the Cabrillo Festival Orchestra, NOW Ensemble, the Da Capo Chamber Players and many others. She has produced commissioned works for Kronos Quartet, eighth blackbird, the Whitney Museum and Carnegie Hall. Mazzoli's compositions were recently performed at the Bang on a Can Marathon and the 2007 Cabrillo Festival of New Music.

In 2006 Mazzoli was a featured composer at Merkin Hall in New York City and at the Gaudeamus New Music Festival in Amsterdam. She is a recipient of a Fulbright Grant to the Netherlands, the 2007 and 2008 ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composers Award, a Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and grants from the American Music Center and the Jerome Foundation.

Mazzoli taught beginning composition at Yale University in 2006 and is now Executive Director of the MATA Festival of New Music in New York City, an organization founded by Philip Glass dedicated to commissioning and promoting new works by young composers.

Mazzoli is also active as a pianist and often performs with Victoire, an "all-star, all-female quintet" (*Time Out New York*) dedicated exclusively to Mazzoli's own compositions. Victoire has been performing in venues throughout New York City since 2008. Mazzoli's recent projects include the premiere of *Sound of the Light*, a new work commissioned by Carnegie Hall, and two performances of *These Worlds In Us* by the Minnesota Orchestra. Upcoming performances include the premiere of new works commissioned by the Kronos Quartet, eighth blackbird, the Whitney Museum of Art and the Santa Fe New Music Ensemble. The composer also received a Jerome Foundation Grant for *Song from the Uproar*, a large-scale multimedia work featuring NOW Ensemble and filmmaker Stephen Taylor that premieres in New York City this May.

## Program Notes

The composer writes: "*Still Life with Avalanche* is a pile of melodies collapsing in a chaotic free-fall. The players layer bursts of sound over the static drones of harmonicas, sketching out a strange and evocative sonic landscape. I wrote this piece while in-residence at Blue Mountain Center, a beautiful artist colony in upstate New York. Halfway through my stay there I received a phone call telling me my cousin had passed away very suddenly. There's a moment in this piece when you can hear that phone call, when the piece changes direction, when the shock of real life works its way into the music's joyful and exuberant exterior. This is a piece about finding beauty in chaos and vice versa. It is dedicated to the (joyful, exuberant and shocking) memory of Andrew Rose."

### **Glenn Kotche • *Projections of (what) Might* (2005)**

*Projections of (what) Might* was inspired by two of my favorite percussionists: Nigerian master drummer and Afro beat legend Tony Allen and jazz legend Ed Blackwell. I transcribed some of their drum grooves, augmented and orchestrated them on an expanded drumkit, then arranged these grooves using the sequence of events from a "master groove," which acts as a template or score for the piece. This created an interlocking duet of grooves. The sounds were enhanced electronically to give the piece a different character. For tonight's performance I'll add a third, live part. The result will be a trio of interlocking drumset grooves in homage to Tony Allen and Ed Blackwell.

—Glenn Kotche

### **Glenn Kotche • *Individual Trains* (2005)**

The formal structure of *Individual Trains* is a stretched or expanded version of the first original drum beat that I came up with when I was 15. I took each subdivision of the beat and stretched it several times in duration. Then each voice of its opposite rhythm was substituted with a more rhythmically complex texture. This results in the feeling of concurrent individual events with a hidden connection. In the version heard tonight, members of eighth blackbird mirror the complex constructions of the track. The film was created from overlapping images or glimpses of Chicago (some very close to the Harris Theater). These diverse clips of our city either directly or impressionistically relate to the sonic elements of the accompanying track.

—Glenn Kotche

### **Glenn Kotche • *Double Fantasy* (2008)**

This piece began as an idea to arrange my vibraphone solo, *Fantasy On A Shona Theme*, for eighth blackbird. I quickly realized that the arrangement was taking on a life of its own, in a way keeping in accordance with one prominent method used for writing new pieces for the traditional mbira - through accidental discovery while playing. My original version was inspired by the beauty of the interlocking mbira (a type of African thumb piano) melodies found in Shona music. The cyclical melodies of the vibraphone solo are retained in the opening section of *Double Fantasy*. These eventually give way to dense and powerful impressions of the vocal timbres of the Shona singers.

—continued

## Program Notes

The metric feel throughout is often ambiguous due to overlapping, independent pulses of the circuitous melodic lines.

—Glenn Kotche

### **Louis Andriessen • *Worker's Union* (1975)**

Louis Andriessen was born in Utrecht, Netherlands in 1939 into a musical family: his father Hendrik and his brother Juriaan were established composers in their own right. Andriessen studied with his father and Kees van Baaren at the Hague Conservatory and between 1962 and 1964 undertook further studies in Milan and Berlin with Luciano Berio. Since 1974 he has combined teaching with his work as a composer and pianist. He is now widely regarded as the leading composer working in the Netherlands today and is a central figure in the international new music scene.

From a background of jazz and avant-garde composition, Andriessen has evolved a style employing elemental harmonic, melodic and rhythmic materials, heard in totally distinctive instrumentation. His acknowledged admiration for Stravinsky is illustrated by a parallel vigor, clarity of expression and acute ear for color.

The range of Andriessen's inspiration is wide, from the music of Charles Ives in *Anachronie I*, the art of Mondriaan in *De Stijl* and medieval poetic visions in *Hadewijch*, to writings on shipbuilding and atomic theory in *De Materie Part I*. He has tackled complex creative issues, exploring the relation between music and politics in *De Staat*, the nature of time and velocity in *De Tijd* and *De Snelheid* and questions of mortality in *Trilogy of the Last Day*.

Andriessen's compositions have attracted many leading exponents of contemporary music, including the two Dutch groups named after his works: De Volharding and Hoketus. Other eminent Dutch performers include the Schoenberg Ensemble, the ASKO Ensemble, the Netherlands Chamber Choir, the Schoenberg Quartet, pianists Gerard Bouwhuis and Cees van Zeeland and conductors Reinbert de Leeuw and Edo de Waart. Groups outside the Netherlands who have commissioned or performed his works include the San Francisco Symphony, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Kronos Quartet, London Sinfonietta, Ensemble Modern, Ensemble InterContemporain, Icebreaker, the Bang on a Can All Stars and the California EAR Unit.

Recent commissions include *La Passione* for the London Sinfonietta, *Racconto dall' inferno* for MusikFabrik and *La Commedia*, a setting of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, for Netherlands Opera.

The composer writes: "*Workers Union* (for any loud sounding instruments) was originally written for the orchestra De Volharding (*Perseverance*), an ensemble comprised mainly of brass instruments in which I myself figured as a pianist at that time. This piece is a combination of individual freedom and severe discipline: its rhythm is exactly fixed; the pitch, on the other hand, is indicated only approximately, on a single-lined staff. It is difficult to play in an ensemble and to remain in step, sort of thing like organising and carrying on political action."

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