



PENTATONE

TRACK INFORMATION

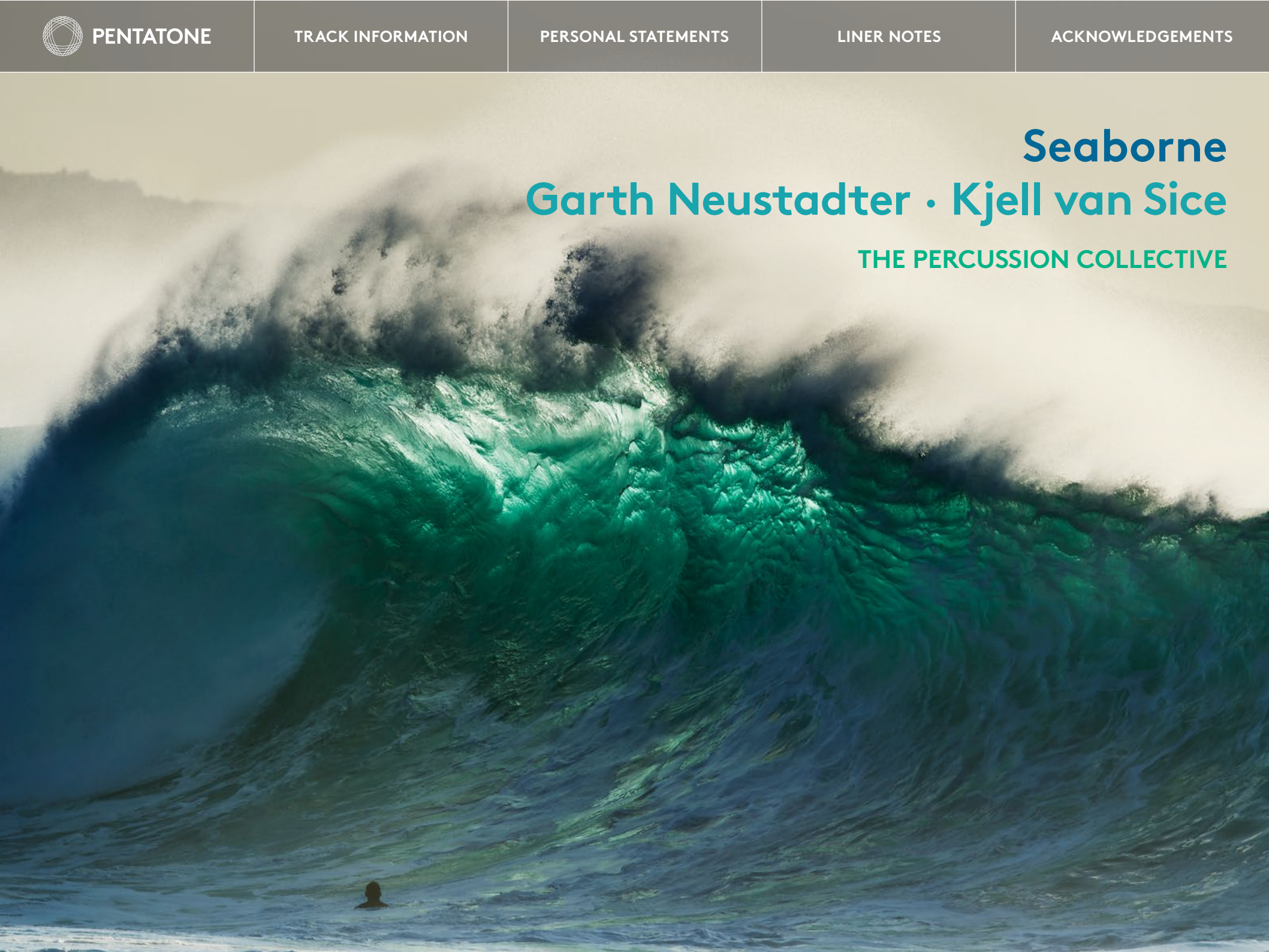
PERSONAL STATEMENTS

LINER NOTES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# Seaborne Garth Neustadter · Kjell van Sice

THE PERCUSSION COLLECTIVE



**SEABORNE**
**Garth Neustadter (b. 1986)**

Commissioned in 2018 by The Brookby Foundation

**Seaborne**

1	Above	9. 43
2	At	9. 01
3	Within	10. 08

Total playing time: 28. 55

 performed by **The Percussion Collective**  
**Robert van Sice**, artistic director

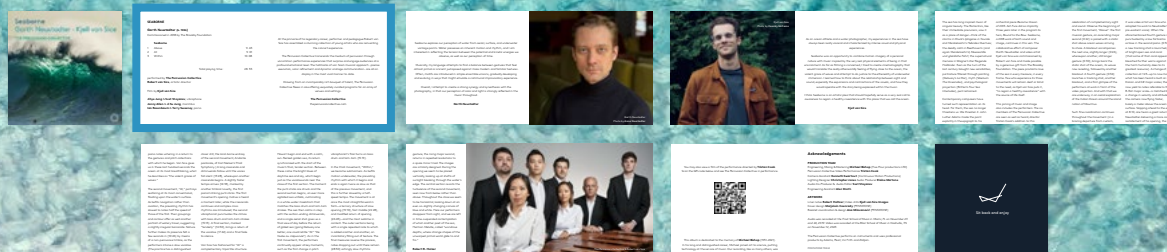
 Film by **Kjell van Sice**
**Jihye Jung & Svet Stoyanov**, vibraphone  
**Jonny Allen & Ji Su Jung**, marimba  
**Ian Rosenbaum & Terry Sweeney**, piano

At the pinnacle of his legendary career, performer and pedagogue Robert van Sice has assembled a stunning collection of young artists who are reinventing the concert experience.

The Percussion Collective transcends the medium of percussion through uncommon performance experiences that surprise and engage audiences at a profound emotional level. The hallmarks of van Sice's musical approach - precise execution, sonic refinement and dynamic onstage communication- are all on display in the most vivid manner to date.

Drawing from an incomparably rich bouquet of talent, The Percussion Collective flexes in size offering exquisitely curated programs for an array of venues and settings.

**The Percussion Collective**  
[thepercussioncollective.com](http://thepercussioncollective.com)

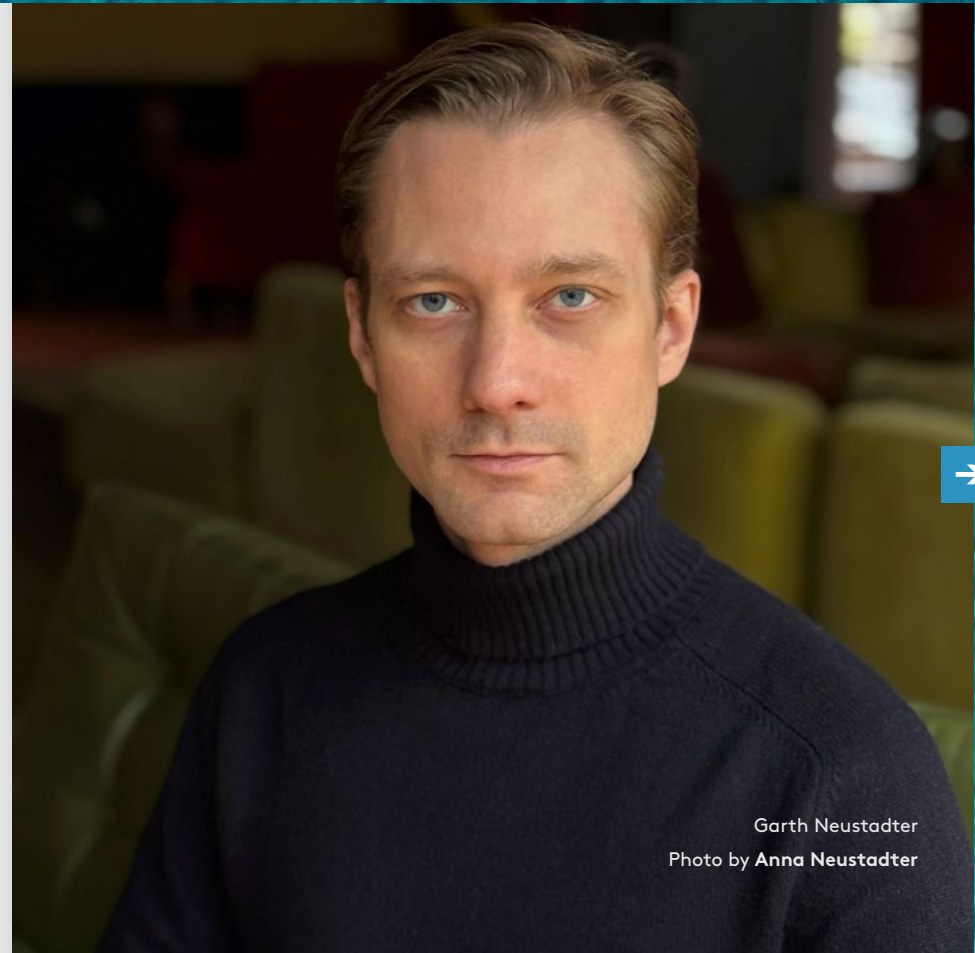


*Seaborne* explores our perception of water from aerial, surface, and underwater vantage points. Water possesses an inherent motion and rhythm, and I am interested in reflecting the tension between the potential and kinetic energies we observe, as well as our perception of time.

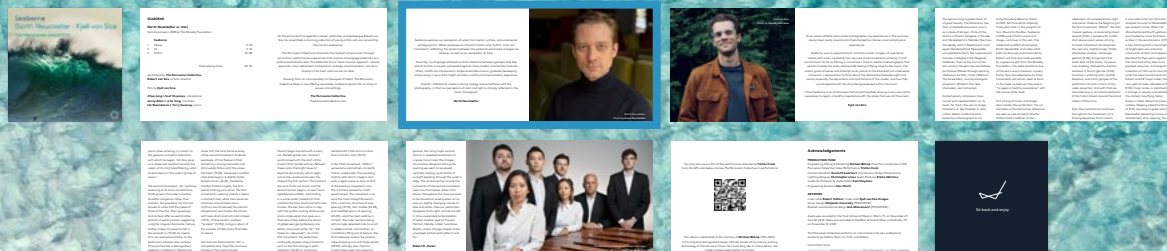
Musically, my language attempts to find a balance between gestures that feel almost primal or ancient juxtaposed against more modern and familiar textures. Often, motifs are introduced in simple ensemble unisons, gradually developing and evolving in ways that might emulate a communal improvisatory experience.

Overall, I attempt to create a strong synergy and synesthesia with the photography, in that our perception of color and light is strongly reflected in the music throughout.

**Garth Neustadter**



Garth Neustadter  
Photo by Anna Neustadter





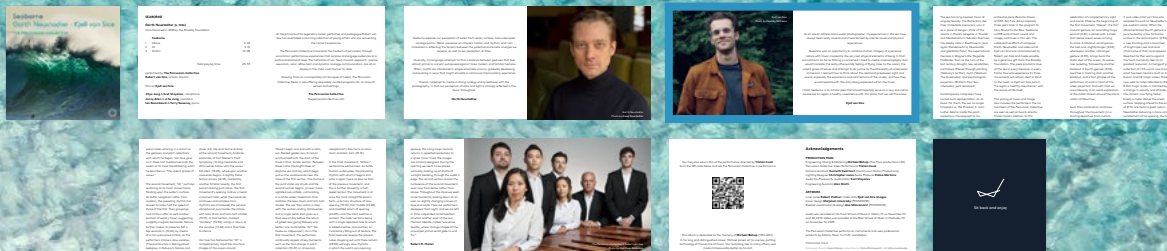
Kjell van Sice  
Photo by Cassidy McCarns

As an ocean athlete and a water photographer, my experiences in the sea have always been really visceral and characterized by intense visual and physical experiences.

*Seaborne* was an opportunity to combine motion imagery of a personal nature with music inspired by the very real physical elements of being in that environment. As far as filming is concerned, I tried to create cinematography that would translate the really otherworldly feeling of flying close to the ocean, the violent grace of waves and attempt to do justice to the ethereality of underwater immersion. I learned how to think about the relationship between sight and sound, especially the expansions and contractions of the visuals, and how they would operate with the story being expressed within the music.

I think *Seaborne* is an artistic plea that should hopefully serve as a very real call to awareness to regain a healthy coexistence with this place that we call the ocean.

**Kjell van Sice**





The sea has long inspired music of singular beauty. The Romantics, like their immediate precursors, saw it as a place of danger—think of the storms in Gluck’s *Iphigénie in Tauride* and Mendelssohn’s *Hebrides Overture*; the deadly calm in Beethoven’s (and again Mendelssohn’s) *Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt*; the supernatural menace in Wagner’s *Der fliegende Holländer*. Even as the turn of the last century brought new sensibilities, portraiture filtered through painting (Debussy’s *La Mer*), myth (Sibelius’s *The Oceanides*), and psychological projection (Britten’s *Four Sea Interludes*), peril remained.

Contemporary composers have turned such representation on its head. For them, the sea no longer threatens us. We threaten it. John Luther Adams made the point explicitly in the epigraph to his

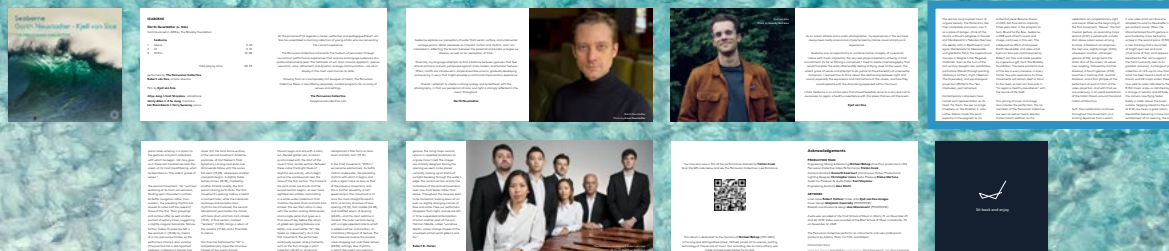
orchestral piece *Become Ocean* of 2013. Ash Fure did so implicitly three years later in the program to hers, *Bound to the Bow. Seaborne*, a 2018 work of both sound and image, continues in this vein. The collaborative effort of composer Garth Neustadter and video artist Kjell van Sice was commissioned by Robert van Sice and made possible by a generous gift from The Brookby Foundation. The piece proclaims love of the sea in every measure, in every frame. Few who experience its three movements will remain deaf or blind to the need, as Kjell van Sice puts it, “to regain a healthy coexistence” with the source of life itself.

This joining of music and image also includes the performers. The six members of The Percussion Collective are seen as well as heard, director Tristan Cook’s addition to this

celebration of complementary sight and sound. Observe the beginning of the first movement, “Above”: the first musical gesture, an ascending major second (0:22) is paired with a static shot above ocean waves arriving to shore. A blackout accompanies the next one, slightly longer (0:26), whereupon another, still longer gesture (0:30), brings back the static shot of the ocean, its waves now receding, followed by another blackout. A fourth gesture (0:34) launches a tracking shot, another blackout, and a first glimpse of the performers at work in front of the video projection. And with that we are underway, in an aerial exploration of the Indian Ocean around the island nation of Mauritius.

Such fine coordination continues throughout the movement (in a bracing departure from custom,

it was video artist van Sice who adapted his work to Neustadter’s pre-existent score). When the aforementioned fourth gesture is punctuated by a low fortissimo octave in the second piano (0:50), a new tracking shot is launched, of bright open sea and coral (that some of that coral appears bleached further warns against the harm humanity does to its greatest resource). A change of pitch collection at 1:23—up to now most of what has been heard is built on C# Dorian and C# major scales; these now yield to notes referable to the B-flat major scale—is matched by a change in velocity and altitude, the camera now flying faster, barely a meter above the ocean surface. Skipping ahead to the end, at 8:10, one hears a great return, Neustadter delivering a more complex restatement of his opening, the low





piano notes ushering in a return to the gestures and pitch collections with which he began. Van Sice gives us in these last hundred seconds the ocean at its most breathtaking, what he describes as “the violent graces of waves.”

The second movement, “At,” portrays seafaring at its most conventional, floating upon the water’s surface. As befits navigation rather than aviation, the prevailing rhythm has slowed to notes half the speed of those of the first. Their groupings and contour offer as well another portrait of watery travel, suggesting a slightly irregular barcarolle. Nature further makes its presence felt a few seconds in (10:26) by means of a non-percussive timbre, as the performers intone a slow vocalise. (The practice has a distinguished pedigree, in Debussy’s *Sirènes* and,

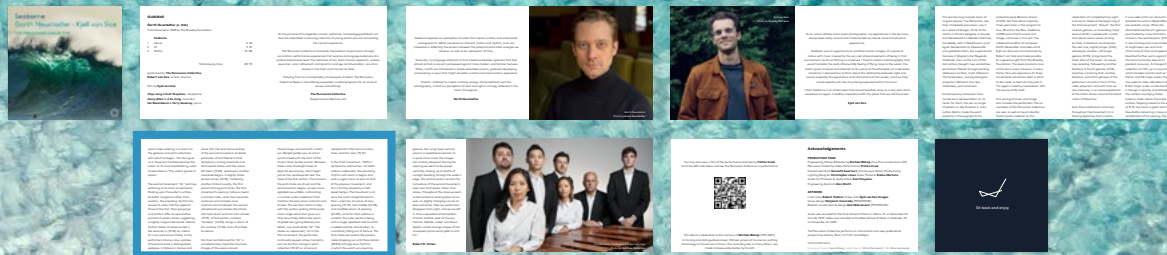
closer still, the land-borne ecstasy of the second movement, *Andante pastorale*, of Carl Nielsen’s Third Symphony.) A long crescendo and diminuendo follow until the voices fall silent (13:28), whereupon another crescendo begins. A slightly faster tempo arrives (14:18), marked by another timbral novelty, the first pianist striking pu’ili sticks. The first movement’s opening motive is heard a moment later, while the crescendo continues and complex cross rhythms are introduced; the second vibraphonist punctuates the climax with bass drum and tam-tam strokes (15:13). A final section, marked “tenderly” (16:50), brings a return of the vocalise (17:42) and a final fade to silence.

Van Sice has fashioned for “At” a complementary tripartite structure. Images of the ocean around

Hawai’i begin and end with a calm, sun-flecked golden sea, its return synchronized with the start of the music’s final, tender section. Between these come the bright blues of daytime sea and sky, which begin just as the vocalise ends near the close of the first section. The moment the pu’ili sticks are struck and the second section begins, an ever more agitated sea unfolds, culminating in a white-water maelstrom that matches the bass drum and tam-tam strokes. The sea then calms in step with the section-ending diminuendo, and a single aerial shot gives us a final view of day before the return of gilded sea (going Debussy one better, one could retile “At” “De l’aube au crépuscule”). As in the first movement, the performers continually appear at key moments, such as the first change in pitch collection (10:47) or at second

vibraphonist’s final turns on bass drum and tam-tam (15:31).

In the third movement, “Within,” we become submariners. As befits motion underwater, the prevailing rhythm with which it begins and ends is again twice as slow as that of the previous movement, and this is further slowed by a half-speed tempo. The movement is at once the most straightforward in form—a ternary structure of slow opening (19:10), fast middle (22:28), and modified return of opening (26:45)—and the most sublime in content. The outer sections being with a single repeated note to which is added another and another, an incantatory filling out of texture. The final measures reverse the process, notes dropping out until there remain (28:50) aching slow rhythms in which the work’s very opening



gesture, the rising major second, returns in repeated resolutions to a spare minor triad. The images are similarly designed. During the opening we seem to be placed vertically, looking up at shafts of sunlight breaking through the water's edge. The central section revisits the turbulence of the second movement, seen now from below rather than above. Throughout the close we seem to be horizontal, looking down at an ever-so-slightly changing canvas of blue and white. Here our performers disappear from sight, and we are left in time-suspended contemplation of what another poet of the sea, Herman Melville, called "wondrous depths, where strange shapes of the unwarped primal world glide to and fro."

**Robert R. Holzer**



The Percussion Collective & Robert van Sice  
Photo by Matthew Goldstein



You may also view a film of the performance directed by **Tristan Cook**. Scan the QR code below and see The Percussion Collective in performance.



This album is dedicated to the memory of **Michael Bishop** (1951–2021). In his long and distinguished career, Michael joined art to science, putting technology at the service of music. Our recording, like so many others, was made immeasurably better by his skill.

### Acknowledgements

#### PRODUCTION TEAM

Engineering, Mixing & Mastering **Michael Bishop** (Five/Four productions LTD)  
Percussion Collective Video Performance **Tristan Cook**  
Camera Assistant **Kenneth Swartout** (Continuous Motion Productions)  
Lighting Designer **Christopher Jones** Audio Producer **Elaine Martone**  
Audio Co-Producer & Audio Editor **Svet Stoyanov**  
Engineering Assistant **Alec Druth**

#### ARTWORK

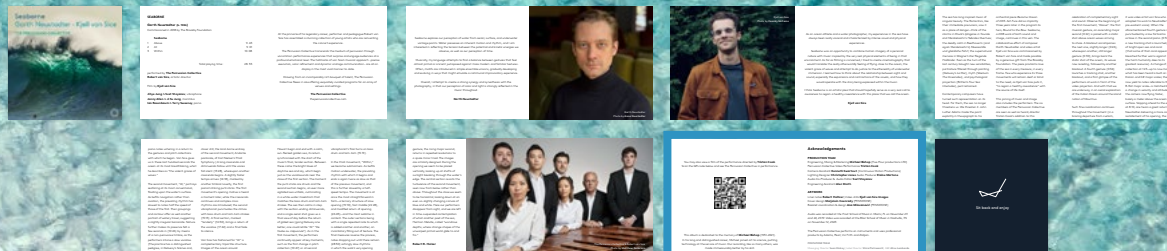
Liner notes **Robert Holtzer** | Video stills **Kjell van Sice Images**  
Cover design **Marjolein Coenrady** (PENTATONE)  
Booklet coordination & design **Ana Milovanović** (PENTATONE)

*Audio was recorded at the Frost School of Music in Miami, FL on November 23 and 24, 2019. Video was recorded at the Blair School of Music in Nashville, TN on November 12, 2023.*

The Percussion Collective performs on instruments and uses professional products by Adams, Pearl, Vic Firth and Zildjian.

#### PENTATONE TEAM

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Sit back and enjoy



**Sensoren**  
Quelle: Wasserwerk Kall von See

**Wasser**  
Das Wasserwerk Kall von See in der Gemeinde Kall von See im Landkreis Wittmund in Ostfriesland liefert Trinkwasser für ca. 10.000 Einwohner. Die Anlage wurde im Jahr 2010 fertiggestellt und ist die größte Wasserwerkanlage in Ostfriesland. Sie ist ein Paradebeispiel für die Nutzung erneuerbarer Energien in der Wasserversorgung. Die Anlage ist vollständig energieautark und speist sich über eine Photovoltaikanlage mit 1,2 MWp. Die Energie wird über eine eigene Stromleitung zum Wasserwerk geleitet. Die Anlage ist ein Vorbild für die Nutzung erneuerbarer Energien in der Wasserversorgung.

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