
Steve Reich

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Traveler's Prayer

"The new work, far from pushing forward in familiar, Reich-style pulsation, had a sense of being suspended in midair, an ancient meditation spun out of looping voices, sustained string chords and the low toll of the piano....Traveler's Prayer has a quality of serenity. In the preface to the score, Reich writes that these biblical verses can apply to travels by air, car or boat, but "they can also be applied to travel from this world to the next". Wisely, Reich stayed home in America. May he long make magical, musical journeys in his mind for the benefit of us all." - *Fiona Maddocks, The Observer*

"slowly winding melodies that seemed drawn from a kind of mournful ecstasy. Traveler's Prayer was conceived before the pandemic but completed in its midst; it was hard not to hear it as shaped by our shared Covid experiences." - *Nick Kimberley, London Evening Standard*

"Although I find myself pining for the presence of Reich's trademark pulse during 'Traveler's Prayer', the piece nevertheless attains a singular beauty, tinged with melancholy. The interplay of voices and the long, sustained tones of stringed instruments produce a sombre, reflective mood which still manages to shine brightly as it resonates in the wonderful acoustics of the RFH." - *Sean Kitching, The Quietus*

"four voices in long sinuous vocal lines, often doubled and coloured by the instrumental ensemble.... (it's) very different from anything Reich has composed before" - *Andrew Clements, The Guardian*

Reich / Richter (2019)

"At times, sound and image achieve an exhilarating synchronicity, as when stripes are hurtling across the screen and Reich's instruments are racing in parallel motion" - *The New Yorker*

"Reminiscent of [Reich's] earliest work, it is very beautiful. As is the film" - *Financial Times*

"Steve Reich has responded to the art of Gerhard Richter with a wonderfully lively yet melancholy new composition" - *The Times*

"a bewitching collaboration between Reich, the German painter Gerhard Richter and the film-maker Corinna Belz... all that mattered was the expressive power of music and art speaking as one" - *The Observer*

"Reich's mesmeric minimalism has the power to disrupt time and space; to shimmer and glisten in a way that often paints images." - *The Guardian*

Recording:

"The cool, elegant Ensemble Intercontemporain performance reveals *Reich/Richter* as one of Reich's most impressive recent works." - *The Guardian*

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"The more intently you listen, the more subtleties emerge among the shifting, criss-crossing textures and phrases, sometimes coloured with gentle melancholy and Hebrew sighs, but decisively upbeat by the end. *Reich/Richter* is an ear-tickling tonic and a happy companion to Reich's valuable newly published book, *Conversations*." – *The Times*

"This is like the Reich of earlier years, second cousin to the *Music for 18 Musicians*, though the push and pull of harmony plays a greater role now alongside rhythm and texture. This recording by the Ensemble Intercontemporain led by George Jackson is vivid and tonally rich." – *Financial Times*

"*Reich/Richter* takes the composer's habitual kaleidoscopic style to its outer limits – with pleasing results. Mesmeric." – *BBC Music Magazine*

Music for Ensemble and Orchestra (2018)

"this is a beautiful and dramatically charged masterpiece, but its impact goes even further than that. The piece is simultaneously retrospective and venturesome. It rests solidly on the stylistic foundations of Reich's unique musical voice while dashing off in new and daring directions. It combines the assurance of a seasoned master with the restless daring of a young artist. It's the finest thing he's done in years." – *Joshua Kosman, San Francisco Chronicle*

"Best by far was Reich's new work, Music for Ensemble and Orchestra.... Reich has never lost his intellectual rigour, and this new score is constructed on a foundation of strong principles. As an ensemble of strings, wind, two vibraphones and two pianos converse in an intricate dialogue, the orchestral background opens up a rich and wider soundscape. The work's multiple layers draw the listener in and do not let go, a rewarding addition to 50 years of minimalism" – *Richard Fairman, Financial Times*

"breathtakingly beautiful and perfectly pitched work....you knew only one composer could have written this. Reich is not a composer who, at this point of his celebrated career, needs to reinvent himself. But it is great news to have him back with the orchestra" – *Mark Swed, Los Angeles Times*

"the music's delightful dancing wit, and the moving, almost ritualistic calm of the slow movement, shone through" – *Ivan Hewitt, Daily Telegraph*

"a vista of shimmering desert stillness" – *Alex Ross, The New Yorker*

"Reich, whose first orchestral work for more than 30 years recalls the focussed euphoria of Desert Music in succinct form, with rapt coupling of solo violin, flute and musky clarinets" – *Anna Picard, The Times*

Runner – Royal Ballet Royal Opera House (November 2016)

"McGregor pairs Reich's 1965 looped tape composition *It's Gonna Rain* with *Runner*, a piece written 50 years later. The first piece is fractured and apocalyptic (a preacher is predicting the end of the world after all), while the second – the new Reich – is

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hopeful, harmonic, healing... McGregor's choreography segues from frantic exposition, almost automated in its pained realisation of impending disaster, to a more sumptuous expression of humanity and haven." – **Debra Craine, *The Times* ******

"... *Runner* is a calmly luminous orchestral piece with the pulsating, propulsive rhythms that animate much of Mr Reich's music. Here, coloured lights play across the grid, and a line of dancers spools in silhouette along one wall, as duets, trios and larger groupings mutate centre stage." – **Roslyn Sulcas, *The New York Times***

***Pulse* – International Contemporary Ensemble Carnegie Hall (November 2016)**

"Beauty is a consistent quality of Reich's recent music, and the most beautiful of all has to be *Pulse*, which was simple and luminous... At the bottom of *Pulse* was a constant eight-note throb from an electric bass through shifting meters. On top, there was a marvellous long-limbed, lyrical melody, repeated at times in tutti, at others in a closely mirrored canon." – **George Grella, *New York Classical Review***

"*Pulse*, for small ensemble, begins with the strings making swooping lyrical lines, as at the start of *Appalachian Spring*. The mood is one of emerging, rising. A gentle, yes, pulse – quick but not pounding – emerges behind it, soon joined by a meatier, lower throb in the electric bass." – **Zachary Woolfe, *The New York Times***

"If there has long been a sense that Reich's early work is his best, the European premiere of *Pulse* (2016), given by Britten Sinfonia as the centrepiece of the first day of Steve Reich at 80, gives pause for thought. Scored for piano, strings, electric bass and braces of flutes and clarinets, *Pulse* cups a calmer, steadier sort of joy in its hands, with chords as crisp and purposeful as the sleigh bells in Mahler's Fourth Symphony." – **Anna Picard, *The Times* ******

Different Trains – London Contemporary Orchestra Metal Liverpool (September 2016)

"The 80th-birthday celebrations for Steve Reich, veteran master of minimalist music, seem more extended than the weddings of Renaissance princes — but nothing so far compares with this project. Just outside Liverpool is a railway station, Edge Hill, locally claimed to be the oldest still used by passengers. Here, in an outdoor yard with trains chugging by on either side, hundreds gathered to see a superb performance in the composer's presence of one of Reich's most poignant works: the aptly chosen *Different Trains*.

...Quite apart from the work's dark musings — the sense of "there, but for the grace of God . . ." — it also deploys a groundbreaking technique. Reich uses loops of people speaking (including the memories of Holocaust survivors), so that speech rhythms and inflections, as well as train sounds, ingeniously generate the instrumental lines." – **Richard Morrison, *The Times* *******

"That this momentous occasion unfolded at Merseyside's Edge Hill railway station - the oldest active passenger railway station

in the world - during Liverpool's Biennial - seemed like some kind of magical happening; the stars truly aligned." – **Peter Guy, *Liverpool Echo***

Music for 18 Musicians, Ensemble Signal

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Harmonia Mundi (HMU907608)

"Steve Reich's 1976 masterpiece, one of the landmarks of 20th-century music, has already acquired its own enduring performing tradition. Music for 18 Musicians may have started out as the exclusive preserve of Reich's own ensemble, but more and more groups now play it, and at least four fine versions of the hour-long work are available on disc. The latest, from the New York-based Ensemble Signal, is certainly one of the best so far. Signal's director, Brad Lubman, has been one of Reich's regular collaborators for many years (he conducted the premiere of Reich's video opera *Three Tales*, for instance), and this performance with a group of young musicians – most of whom, as the sleeve note points out, would not have been born when the piece was first performed – has the perfect combination of tightly disciplined ensemble playing and creative fantasy. There's tremendous, unstoppable energy in this performance, an urgent edge to its textures and a surging power to its thrilling climaxes, that make the greatness of the music unmistakable." – **Andrew Clements, *The Guardian* *******

Quartet – Colin Currie Group Metal Wood Skin, Southbank Centre (Oct 2014)

"Relaxed, intimate and bittersweet in mood, it's a chamber work in essence, written with the kind of egalitarianism between the musicians that we often find in string quartets, as the emphasis shuttles fluidly from one player, or combination of players, to the next. The slow central section, with its twisting vibraphone lines and shifting harmonies, is somewhat impressionistic. Rhythmic propulsion in the more dynamic outer movements frequently gives way to block chordal figurations that briefly unite all four players in music of considerable rhythmic complexity. Its grace belies its difficulty: it was played with an unassuming virtuosity and a well-nigh faultless sense of ensemble, in which mutual understanding is paramount. Reich was given a hero's reception when it was over." – **Tim Ashley, *The Guardian* *******

"In the brand-new Quartet for Two Vibraphones and Two pianos, written specially for Colin Currie, one felt something different. The melody, touched in delicately by Currie and Sam Walton on vibraphones, seemed to be sung rather than struck. It was like a dancing song of praise, and suddenly we seemed to be somewhere ancient. Then, in the cheerfully dancing final movement, the

New York neon lights came back. Reich... can bring distant worlds together, something which many apparently more sophisticated composers never achieve." – **Ivan Hewett, *The Telegraph* *******

"The Quartet has plenty of antecedents in Reich's output, both for its glittering, glamorous sound-world, and also its two-times-two pairing of instruments playing in canon (copying each other at a short distance). But it also connects with a specifically American tradition, at times fleetingly echoing Bernstein or even Sondheim. The four players capitalised on the richness of the music." - **Richard Fairman, *The Financial Times* *******

"Pure minimalistic happiness... notion of musical bliss." – **Paul Driver, *The Sunday Times***

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Music for 18 Musicians

The Rest is Noise Southbank Centre (Nov 2013)

"The performance was technically impeccable and musically overwhelming; richly deserving of the lengthy standing ovation." – **Guy Dammann, *The Guardian* *******

"That concept of harmonic stasis, rhythmic and melodic patterning which appears to stay the same, yet constantly regenerates and reinvents itself, reached its apotheosis in Steve Reich's Music for 18 Musicians. At just an hour long, this piece is vibrant with a kaleidoscope of changing colour, fanciful imagination and sheer glee in communication..." – **Hilary Finch, *The Times* *******

"Reich launched his concert by humbly playing secondo to Colin Currie's lead in "Clapping Music", after which Currie and his chamber group gave scintillating performances of three Reich classics, culminating in a magnificent account of his chef d'oeuvre, "Music for 18 musicians". And for that the Festival Hall acoustic was perfect, allowing it to create the impression of a complex mobile gracefully turning, in which each musician played an independent and eloquent part. It was one thing and many things, simultaneously static and bursting with event: a joyful conundrum." – **Michael Church, *The Independent* *******

The Cave

Nonesuch Records (7559 79327-2 (3/96))

"*The Cave* subtly weaves together music and speech to create an intricate and absorbing narrative." – **Pwyll ap Siôn, *Gramophone Magazine***

London Sinfonietta / Radio Rewrite (March 2013)

"Motoric, rhythmic patterns drive the music inexorably towards a sort of ecstasy: it can't help but make you feel cheerful. Scored for flute, clarinet, two vibraphones, two pianos, string quartet and electric bass, this is no mere set of variations. Instead, it reworks the songs into five movements, drawing on their harmonies but rarely giving you a hint of their actual melodies. This is not so much a rewrite as a reimagining in Reich's hyperreal style; instantly accessible, instantly enjoyable. The two vibraphones lay a pearlescent luminosity over the insistent rhythm of the faster movements (based on Jigsaw), while the two slow movements (drawn from Everything) are content to move from one block chord to another, enjoying the sensation of the progression while sprinkling a duet for woodwind over the top." – **Stephen Pritchard, *The Observer***

"In its instrumentation, *Radio Rewrite* acts as a bridge between *2X5* and *Double Sextet*. Reich's technique remains a marvel." – **Anna Picard, *The Independent on Sunday***

"*Radio Rewrite*, given its premiere by the London Sinfonietta who also commissioned the piece, puts Reich in the unusual position of working in someone else's groove." – **Neil Fisher, *The Times***

"There was the familiar feeling of being sucked into the rhythms as the pianos pounded or tinkled, the vibraphones shimmered and the strings keened wistfully." – **Nick Kimberley, *Evening Standard***

"*Radio Rewrite* is a rich and impressive ensemble piece for non-rock instruments... Those much-hyped allusions are fleeting (most noticeable are hints at the melodic loops of the *Kid A* track) and although the piece begins with sets of minimalist patters, the journey through the five interlocking movements is varied, with periods of shadowy ambience.

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Reich's opinion, republished as part of the programme notes, is that the polarisation of 'concert' and 'popular' music for much of the 20th century was just a blip. For many, *Radio Rewrite* will represent more evidence of the new convergence." – **Laura Battle, *The Financial Times* ******

"Real composers have two moments of fame. The first comes when they're young and fashionable, the second when they're venerable masters. Steve Reich, amazingly, combines the two. He's both achingly hip and a grand old man.

His brand-new *Radio Rewrite*, co-commissioned by the Sinfonietta, referred to two Radiohead songs, but it was a long way from being a 'cover version' or arrangement.

In the slow movements the obsessive "three-chord trick" of Radiohead's *Everything in Its Right Place* kept surfacing, but so cunningly woven into a purely Reich-like texture that it was gone almost before you registered it. In the fast ones it was the urgent melody of *Jigsaw Falling into Place* that caught one's ear.

But again, what gave pleasure was seeing how thoroughly the borrowed material turned into Reich.

It was a fine display of compositional mastery, which had nothing to do with remix culture, and everything to do with old-fashioned virtues of harmony and counterpoint." – **Ivan Hewitt, *The Telegraph***

"The Festival Hall was predictably packed for this all-Reich concert, the excitement heightened by the fact that not only was a new piece in the offing but that one of the numerous baseball-capped heads dotted around the audience was Steve Reich's own.

The piece, commissioned by the London Sinfonietta, can claim significance because while Reich has always argued that concert composers should draw on rock music, he hasn't done so much himself. Here, though, he has taken two Radiohead songs as the basis for a work called *Radio Rewrite*.

Those Radiohead fans (and band members) present will not have missed the snippets from *Everything in its Right Place* and *Jigsaw*, but the piece absorbs only a handful of gestures from the songs into an otherwise familiar compositional framework, with alternating fast and slow movements, and oppositions between paired vibraphones and pianos giving structure and drive to the melodic material. In its instrumentation and quasi-renaissance voice-leading, in which the slow-moving lines of the melodic instruments are scrunched together.

Reich, for all his celebrity, remains a musicians' musician, his work drawing on a profound respect for craft and graft, and filled, in consequence, by the heat of genuine artistic collaboration." – **Guy Dammann, *The Guardian* ******

"*Radio Rewrite* is based on Reich's take on two Radiohead songs, *Everything In Its Right Place* and *Jigsaw Falling Into Place*. The bereft, weightless second movement offered a deepened, desolate take on *Everything's* drifting ennui, although *Jigsaw's* more sanguine chords and chorus arose most frequently in a what is a spirited, sometimes joyous, new work." – **Phil Miller, *The Herald***

"It was after 10pm before the players got round to Reich's new Radiohead-inspired *Radio Rewrite*, but it was worth the wait." – **David Kettle, *The Scotsman* ******

Kronos Quartet / Nonesuch Records recording *WTC 9/11*

"Finally a 9/11 work that manages to communicate the complex and often contradictory range of emotions, thoughts and

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feelings caused by the momentous event. A truly profound work." – **Pwyl ap Siôn, *Gramophone 'Critics' Choice 2011'***

"*WTC 9/11* finds [Reich] on outstanding form: his skilful selection and manipulation of sound resources has created an emotionally raw evocation of the shock, terror and sheer incredulity of that day." – **Barry Witherden, *BBC Music Magazine***

"like everything he writes, it's wonderfully lucid, and calculated precisely." – **Andrew Clements, *The Guardian***

"Reich is as eloquent as ever in the nuts-and-bolts music of WTC 9/11. The exploration of the tiny inflections of sampled speech and Reich's skilful knitting of the voices to one another...is unfailingly moving." – **Andrew Mellor, *BBC Music***

"Given that composing music about a catastrophe like the September 11th terrorist attacks is essentially impossible, Reich's admirers will consider him to have avoided the major pitfalls. The documentary realism licensed by archival voices of air traffic controllers, panicked New Yorkers et al allocates the music in the right setting; I like touches like the New York City cantor who intones psalms near the end...Reich's sincerity is beyond question." – **Phillip Clark, *Classic FM Magazine***

Steve Reich at the BBC Proms 2011

"Steve Reich probably never thought that he would share a bed with Rachmaninov. But that's the Proms for you: fat, sorrowing romanticism one minute; slim, eupeptic minimalism the next. For those who attended both of Wednesday's concerts, the conjunction was definitely odd. Yet the experiences somehow complemented each other.

Rachmaninov's Symphony No. 2 and Reich's Music for 18 Musicians, peaks of each composer's career, both lasted an hour; both sprayed the listener with notes and repetition. Differences lay in the degree, means and emotions stirred. And, given, the week's turmoil, Ensemble Modern's Reich display definitely offered the greater balm.

Amplification coarsened those sunny 1970s waves of sound, muddying the clarity. But the joy of riding the waves remained as the ensemble's wielders of mallets shrank or expanded rhythmic cells, Synergy Vocals breathed sweet nothings, and four pianists (Reich included) tirelessly fingered their chords. The total result was almost jazzy. The rest of the programme gave pleasure, too, not least Electric Counterpoint. Mats Bergström really got into it, bending knees, strumming and plucking as guitars, live or recorded, twanged and bopped.

Even with Kirill Karabits's passionate conducting, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's programme couldn't compete with that." – **Geoff Brown, *The Times***

"Where other music festivals focus on one of the year's musical anniversaries, the sheer size of the BBC Proms means it can invite every composer, living or dead, who has any reason to be there. The late-night Prom on Wednesday threw a 75th birthday party for [Steve Reich](#) and drew a big crowd. There is no lack of recent works that might have been played but the programme chose instead to look back to the early days of minimalism in the 1970s and 1980s.

Reich himself came on at the start, with Rainer Römer, to perform Clapping Music, a four-hand duet that sets up intriguing cross-rhythms. At least, that is the intention. The infamous echo of the Royal Albert Hall quickly multiplied it to an army of clapping hands. Guitarist Mats Bergström followed as soloist in Electric Counterpoint, where the soloist is multiplied by a dozen or more pre-recorded guitars (no help from the hall's echo needed). Then Synergy Vocals and Ensemble Modern came together to perform Music for 18 Musicians. This is one of Reich's seminal pieces and the hypnotic rhythms of its amplified women's voices, pianos and tuned percussion created a seductive aura of sound." – **Richard Fairman, *Financial Times***

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"At the [Proms](#), [Steve Reich](#), that messiah of minimalism, received a rock star's welcome at a late-night concert held to honour his 75th birthday later this year, and immediately clapped straight back at the audience – only, this being Reich, in rhythmic patterns of 12, then 13, then 14 pulses. His Clapping Music is among the most minimal in minimalism. All you need is your hands and a friend with similar appendages. Oh, and you need to count like crazy.

It's the perfect introduction to the principles of all of Reich's work: finding patterns, repeating them, shifting them on. When performed in front of a large audience, Reich suggests the clapping should be amplified...

...his 1987 piece, Electric Counterpoint, featured Swedish guitarist Mats Bergström, who played amid a brilliant skein of interweaving, recorded guitars (sometimes as many as 14). But it was in Music for 18 Musicians – with Synergy Vocals and Ensemble Modern – that Reich's quiet genius was most gloriously evident. A pulse is set by marimbas, xylophones, vibraphones and pianos that chug along, in complex variations, for almost an hour, while over it, under it and around it two clarinetists, four singers, a cellist and a violinist introduce another sort of pulse, the rhythm of our breathing.

While singers, woodwind, pianists (Reich included) and string players stay at their stations, the percussionists move among their instruments, taking over from one another or stepping out of the music altogether until required to return for a new section, always signalled by a bell-like declaration from the vibraphone. In this way, it feels like a piece of liturgy, a reverence falling over the whole process as the music continues on its logical cycle towards completion. Everything is entirely tonal, the harmony stable, the sonority rich and satisfying. The whole experience felt oddly religious and deeply cleansing." - **Stephen Pritchard, *The Observer***

"This well-attended late-night event had a genuine feeling of celebration. In October, the leading American composer [Steve Reich](#) turns 75, and his ongoing acceptance into the pantheon of the greats of the western classical tradition was marked here by the inaugural [Proms](#) outing of two of his major works.

Wearing his trademark baseball cap, Reich took part in two items in this retrospective, firstly joined by percussionist [Rainer Römer](#) in the short but seminal Clapping Music (1972), though the hall's acoustic tended to offer not the intended sound of four hands clapping but eight or perhaps more. Altogether meatier and better suited to the vast venue was Electric Counterpoint (1987), in which Swedish guitarist [Mats Bergström](#) bounced enthusiastic live responses back towards the 12 pre-recorded tracks vibrating from the speakers in front of him. The result is a deliberately free-flying composition, suggestive of a jamming session, and Bergström's extrovert manner suited it perfectly.

The final piece – in which Reich returned as one of four pianists underpinning [Ensemble Modern](#)'s clean-cut realisation – was the large-scale minimalist masterpiece Music for 18 Musicians. Now 35 years old, it is more widely admired with each passing year. At nearly an hour long, the piece allows you to home in on infinitesimal detail at the same time as grasping an overview of its complex trajectory. In its luminously percussive sound world, topped off by the gemlike precision of [Synergy Vocals](#)' interventions, its endless harmonic perspectives seem to spin off into an infinite distance." - **George Hall, *The Guardian***

"There could be no better way of celebrating Steve Reich's 75th birthday than with a performance of his 'Music for 18 Musicians', and the packed hall for this late-night Prom testified to the size and devotion of his fan-club. This is a work for which 'ground-breaking' really is the mot juste, yet although it has earned Reich the title 'founding father of minimalism', he himself regards it as leaving minimalism far behind. Its structure is at once pellucid and dizzily complex: Reich says he's happy if people simply enjoy it, without knowing precisely what polyphonic patterns are being developed. Eleven chords from clarinets and singers announce the start, after which a short piece is built on each chord in turn.

One of the key influences behind this work was the twelfth-century polyphony of the Parisian composer Perotin, whose elaborate extensions of melody here got their twenty-first century answer as Synergy Vocals negotiated Reich's intricate score. Another influence was Balinese gamelan, partly through its textures, and partly thanks to the way its drummers give the rest of the

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players their cue. Here the cues came from Rainer Romer's vibraphone, heralding each harmonic change with bell-like chords: the mallet-instrument ensemble – marimbas, xylophones, and pianos (at one of which Reich officiated in his trademark baseball cap) – created brilliant effects and justified Paul Griffiths' felicitous observation in the programme that the whole thing is essentially a joy machine. Meanwhile Reich and Romer had opened the concert with a performance of 'Clapping Music', a five-minute rhythmic cycle which they completed with the precision of a mathematical QED, and guitarist Mats Bergstrom had interacted with 14 recorded guitars in 'Electric Counterpoint'." - **Michael Church, *The Independent***

"The Royal Albert Hall is accustomed to showcasing veteran performers – the Liza Minnellis, the Engelbert Humperdincks – but the cheer that went up late on Thursday night was for the father of minimalism, Steve Reich, 75 this year and showing no signs of quitting his baseball cap yet.

And as the minutes ticked towards midnight, and a few Cinderellas scurried away, the cloth of gold that is Music for 18 Musicians unfolded, the major item in Prom 36. For 18 musicians, read 19, for Reich sat in at one of the four pianos, which, with the many instruments for six percussionists, two violins, two clarinets/bass clarinets (Ensemble Modern) and the four female voices of Synergy Vocals, wove the remarkable textures of the 1974-6 piece, receiving its first Proms performance. Rhythm is everything here, melody born out of it rather than drawn over it; rhythm is both warp and weft, ever altering, imperceptibly. If Reich ever goes into textiles, I'll buy the lot.

He opened the concert with Rainer Römer in Clapping Music, scored for two pairs of hands. This five-minute musical Rubik's Cube is a delight – the two performers clap the same rhythmic pattern together, then one skips ahead, 12 times, until the pair reunite. Do try this at home – it's ridiculously hard. Mats Bergström was the guitarist in Electric Counterpoint, a kaleidoscope for the ears." - **Claudia Pritchard, *Independent on Sunday***

Reverberations: The Influence of Steve Reich, London

"Saturday began at 11am with five players, five pitches, five wooden dowels and hammers, and Steve Reich's Music for Pieces of Wood, music of simple means and simple intoxication. But by mid-evening the Barbican's weekend marathon Reverberations: The Influence of Steve Reich had reached music far more pertinent and subtle.

For 15 terse, intense minutes we heard the Kronos Quartet give the European premiere of WTC 9/11, for string quartet and recorded speech — first heard in March, but a piece even more resonant after the death of Osama bin Laden. The speech was derived from air-traffic controllers, New York firemen and residents of Lower Manhattan: voices from the World Trade Centre tragedy woven into music by the one US composer to forge a truly humane and responsible art from the processes of minimalism.

Reich has a long history of using minimalism's needlework to reflect the living world, starting with the Hebrew psalm settings of Tehillim in 1981. He's also become exceedingly skilful in fusing instrumental music with the patterns of documentary speech. Possibly digital technology has made him too skilful, because on Saturday the Kronos's nervous phrases, rising and falling, fused so tightly that the speech element was sometimes hard to decipher. "Every available ambulance ... I'm trapped in the rubble ... one of the towers just in flames": this was a libretto that always deserved to be heard clearly. Yet, over its three linked sections, steadily paced, WTC still made an emotional impact. Melodic echoes of the synagogue helped; so, too, did the work's comparative modesty. John Adams's On the Transmigration of Souls retains its value as a grandiloquent response to the September 11 attacks; but I suspect that Reich's tauter memorial will live longer." - **Geoff Brown, *The Times***

"...Reverberations, a sprawling Barbican celebration of the approaching 75th birthday of that American minimalist Steve Reich, setting him beside the many younger composers he has influenced.

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Reich's new work, WTC 9/11, for the Kronos Quartet, funded by half a dozen bodies including the Barbican, where it had its European premiere, is unashamedly political. The letters stand for "World Trade Center" (and, as someone suggested, "World to Come"), and in the 15-minute course of its three linked, constant-tempo movements, authentic snippets of eye-witness commentary from air-traffic controllers, firemen and Manhattan residents are fed digitally into the bare, bleak but 12-part texture (two pre-recorded quartets mixed with the live one), and doubled by one or other of the players. The effect is moving, but in an inescapably dutiful way; though the first violin's mimicry at beginning and end of the signal an off-the-hook telephone makes (a repeated F) is just the sort of casual detail that can unlock a larger area of feeling." - **Paul Driver, *The Sunday Times***

"An even more remarkable event in musical terms was the panoply of outstanding contemporary works jostling for attention in the past seven days. Leading the lineup was Reverberations: The Influence of Steve Reich at the Barbican and LSO St Luke's, an astounding weekend marking the iconic – and never ironic – American composer's 75th birthday.

Some 5,000 people attended, spanning all generations and with artists, including Reich himself, conspicuously present at each other's concerts and enjoying the celebratory atmosphere.

The UK premiere of Reich's WTC 9/11, played by the Kronos Quartet, was an unshowy, heartfelt composition of simple intensity, making haunting use of taped voices." - **Fiona Maddocks, *The Observer***

"It must be an odd experience to hear one's own work eulogised by a host of admirers in front of a paying audience, as if one had already passed into history. That was Steve Reich's experience last weekend at the Barbican Centre in London. The eulogisers were the numerous composers and musicians, mostly New York-based, who'd been invited to the Barbican for a survey of Reich's influence on contemporary music, entitled Reich Reverberations.

That influence has been massive, and the survey was correspondingly generous, spilling over two 11-hour days.

There were avant-rock musicians such as Tyondai Braxton, the New York-based percussion group Bang on a Can, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Guildhall School students, the Theatre of Voices... the list goes on.

...one could come away thinking that Reich's minimalism has been a fertilising and enlivening influence, in surprisingly various ways.

In the end, it was the innocence and shy ecstasy of Reich's own music that left the deepest impression, above all the lovely performance by the BBC Symphony Orchestra of Variations for Winds, Strings and Keyboards, conducted by André de Ridder." – **Ivan Hewett, *Daily Telegraph***

"It hardly seems five years since the Barbican celebrated Steve Reich's 70th birthday with a weekend of his finest works. To mark his 75th, rather than concentrating exclusively on Reich's music, these two days aimed to show the extent of his influence across a huge spectrum of composers and styles.

The three founder composers of Bang on a Can – David Lang, Julia Wolfe and Michael Gordon – hosted the concerts, so they had a New York slant. The lineup was spectacularly impressive... among the works by Reich was a clutch of local premieres, as well as the first European performance of his latest work for the Kronos Quartet.

WTC 9/11 is Reich's concise memorial to the World Trade Centre atrocity. It incorporates recordings of messages from air-traffic controllers, radio broadcasts, and interviews with witnesses that use their speech rhythms to generate musical material. The sound of the quartet is multilayered, with one group heard live and two pre-recorded, to produce a 12-part "quartet" texture. It's a restrained, taut piece in three continuous movements, almost ritualised in its plainness, and tremendously powerful in effect." - **Andrew Clements, *Guardian***

Steve Reich

Selected Reviews

"Once an outcast, Steve Reich is now a musical figurehead. Reverberations, the Barbican's overstuffed and amiably chaotic celebration of his approaching 75th birthday, surveyed his career and its impact on younger composers, not all classically minimalist.

Yet while works by the reverberants outnumbered Reich's, his dominated.

Saturday's evening concert included a European premiere, WTC 9/11, made newly timely by Bin Laden's death. It uses pre-

recorded voices to generate melodic seeds that Reich feeds to the musicians, in this case Kronos Quartet, themselves both live and pre-recorded. There is something shocking about music made from 9/11 messages ("no contact with the pilot ... every available ambulance...") but Reich fashions an anguished memorial that resonates beyond the immediate context.

Earlier, the BBC Symphony Orchestra played Variations for Winds, Strings and Keyboards (1979). Transferred to large orchestra, Reich's interlocking musical cells and metamorphoses seemed more diffuse, emphasised by the work that opened Sunday's concert. Clapping Music (1972) is what it says: 10 hands (two of them Reich's) clapping out overlapping interference patterns.

Its complexity echoed through So Percussion's performance of Drumming Part 1. Four drummers, eight bongos, shifting pulses: auditory hallucinations guaranteed." - **Nick Kimberley, Evening Standard**

"2x5 illustrated how Reich's capacity for writing eloquent, exhilarating and ear-catching music remains undimmed. The composer, in his trademark baseball cap, took to the stage to thunderous applause." - **Peter Quinn, The Arts Desk**