



Reich/Richter

Wednesday 23 October 2019 7.30pm & 9.30pm,
Hall

Steve Reich Runner

Reich/Richter (European premiere, Barbican and
Britten Sinfonia co-commission)

Film by Gerhard Richter and Corinna Belz, music
by Steve Reich, montage by Rudi Heinen;
co-curated by Alex Poots and Hans Ulrich Obrist

Britten Sinfonia

Colin Currie conductor

Part of Barbican Presents 2019–20

Produced by the Barbican and Britten Sinfonia

Commissioned by The Shed, NYC
Barbican Centre and Britten Sinfonia,
The Los Angeles Philharmonic Association,
Gustavo Dudamel, Music & Artistic Director,
Cal Performances, University of California,
Berkeley,
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Programme produced by Harriet Smith;
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Welcome from the Barbican

What happens when you bring together two giants of contemporary culture – composer Steve Reich and artist Gerhard Richter? That is exactly what filmmaker Corinna Belz has done in *Reich/Richter*, which was premiered in New York in April this year and tonight receives its European premiere.

Gerhard Richter has long been fascinated by music, and has produced series of paintings on figures as diverse as J S Bach and John Cage. And Steve Reich is equally attuned to the visual world, not least through his multimedia operas *The Cave* and *Three Tales*.

The starting point for this new film is Richter's abstract painting *946-3*, a work of immense energy – both visual and rhythmic.

Together with Britten Sinfonia composer and artist have combined original music and digital visuals, algorithmically derived from Richter's painting, to create an artwork that is boundlessly more than the sum of its parts.

Richter has described the collaboration as 'a stream of images, its rhythmic flow interpreted by music and, at the same time, a musical composition visualised by film images', and it seems set to be one of the most significant moments in contemporary art this year.

It promises to be a remarkable evening. I hope you enjoy it.

Huw Humphreys
Head of Music, Barbican

Welcome from Britten Sinfonia

Almost exactly three years ago, Britten Sinfonia was proud to be part of the Barbican's memorable events celebrating the 80th birthday of Steve Reich, giving the European premiere of his new orchestral work, *Pulse*. So when Reich approached the orchestra about his planned collaboration with Gerhard Richter it made perfect sense for us to contact the Barbican to see if we could reprise our partnership and work together as co-commissioners and co-producers to bring the European premiere of this extraordinary project to London.

Tonight's performances of both *Reich/Richter* and his 2016 work *Runner* are not

only poised to be among the most notable cultural events in London this year, but also demonstrate the huge creative potential of the partnerships between the Barbican and its Resident and Associate Artists. Together we can be so much more than the sum of our parts, and at Britten Sinfonia we are proud and delighted to be members of the Barbican family.

We hope you have a wonderful evening.

David Butcher
Chief Executive & Artistic Director,
Britten Sinfonia

Steve Reich (born 1936)

Runner (2016)

Runner, for a large ensemble of winds, percussion, pianos and strings was completed in 2016 and is about 16 minutes in duration. While the tempo remains more or less constant, there are five movements, played without pause, that are based on different note durations. First, even 16ths [semiquavers], then irregularly accented eighths [quavers], then a very slowed-down version of the standard bell pattern from Ghana, fourth comes a return to the irregularly accented eighths and finally a return to the 16ths but now played as pulses by the winds for as long as a breath will comfortably sustain them.

The title was suggested by the rapid opening and my awareness that, like a runner, I would have to pace the piece to reach a successful conclusion.

Programme note © Steve Reich, reprinted with kind permission from Boosey & Hawkes

'Runner' was commissioned by the Royal Opera House Covent Garden; Ensemble Signal through New Music USA's Commissioning Music/USA program, made possible by generous support from the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, the Ford Foundation, the Francis Goelet Charitable Lead Trusts, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, New York State Council on the Arts, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Helen F Whitaker Fund; Cal Performances, University of California, Berkeley; Washington Performing Arts, with the support of the Library of Congress Dina Koston and Roger Shapiro Fund; and Ensemble Modern, with kind support by the City of Frankfurt am Main

Reich/Richter

Steve Reich talks to Carol Ann Cheung about creating the music for Gerhard Richter's new film, made by Corinna Belz

Carol Ann Cheung How did this project first come together?

Steve Reich It goes back to 2009. I used to play occasionally with the Frankfurt-based Ensemble Modern – *Drumming Part 1* and *Music for 18 Musicians*. Richter was having a show at the Ludwig Museum in Cologne and wanted me to play *Drumming Part 1* with members of the ensemble inside the show and to play *Music for 18 Musicians* at the nearby Cologne Philharmonie, all of which we did. It went extremely well and Richter and I had a chance to meet. We didn't spend much time together but there was warm, mutual respect and admiration.

Seven years later, in 2016, I heard that he would like to discuss a new project. He suggested meeting at the Marian Goodman Gallery where he shows in New York. We met there and he showed me his *Patterns* book. It starts with one of his abstract paintings from the 1990s. He scanned a photo of the painting into a computer and then cut the scan in half and took each half, cut that in half and two of the four quarters he reversed into mirror images. He then repeated this process of divide, mirror, repeat from half to quarter, eighth, 16th, 32nd, all the way up to 4096th. The net effect is to go from an abstract painting to a series of gradually smaller anthropomorphic 'creatures' (since the mirroring produces bilateral symmetry) to still smaller 'psychedelic' abstractions, to very fine stripes.

Richter said he was making a film of the book together with Corinna Belz and would I consider writing the music? I said it was a very interesting project and that I would like to see some of the film. They sent some and I agreed to compose the score.

CAC Does the film follow the same progression and structure as the *Patterns* book?

SR No, in the film, it's basically the book backwards and considerably less systematic. It starts with the stripes, and then it changes gradually to larger and larger 'abstract images' or anthropomorphic 'creatures'. The film never gets to the full painting, but it gets close and then it goes gradually back to the stripes. So it's kind of an arch form.

CAC I know you've worked with arch forms in the past. Was that what attracted you to the project?

SR It was one factor but what really got me involved was the very beginning of the film with the pulsating, colour-shifting, glowing stripes. Instead of dividing, mirroring and repeating, the film was multiplying and repeating. In computer terms, the initial stripes were made with 2 pixels. Then they gradually grew to 4, 8, 16, 32, and so on.

Now, just before I started work on this project, I completed two pieces: *Runner* and *Music for Ensemble and Orchestra*. Both pieces end with an oscillation between two gradually changing notes played by almost all the instruments. I felt that I wanted to begin a piece with that oscillation, and here the film began with 2 pixels. It was a perfect way to move from the end of my just-completed pieces to the beginning of this project. The structure of the music would be tied to the structure of the film. That was the basic idea.

CAC You're saying the film and the music are both based on the same structure. How exactly did that work?

SR The exact timing of the film, as with any film, is measured in standard SMPTE time code. It indicates the exact hour, minute, second and

fraction of a second of the film, and was visible in a window in the lower-righthand corner of the film as I worked with it on my computer. The time code indicates the exact moments where the visuals shift.

As I said before, when the film begins with the 2-pixel stripes, the music starts with a two-16th-note [semiquaver] oscillating pattern. When the film goes to four pixels, the music moves onto a four-16th-note pattern, then to eight, and 16. After that, I began to think, this is going to get ridiculous, so at that point I began introducing longer note values – initially eighth notes [quavers], and later, as the pixel count grew in the film, to quarter notes [crotchets]. By the middle of the film, when the images move from 512 to 1024 pixels and the images become larger and more ‘creature’-like, the music really slows. Later, as the pixel count begins to diminish, the music moves back into more rapid eighths and then 16ths, ending with the most intense rapid movement. However, the changes between an image shift and the music changing are not so exact. Richter, Corinna and I all agreed to keep some flexibility.

CAC Do you think the music would have turned out differently if it wasn’t tied to the film?

SR The music only exists because I was asked to compose something for the film. Much of the film was completed before I started composing – that is the usual order when writing music for a film. There are other situations where the music predates the film. For instance, a number of young filmmakers have made films to accompany my piece *Different Trains*. They have to adapt their timing to the music.

For me, in the traditional situation of writing for a pre-existing film, I found it forced me to think of new ways of composing. I’m not a movie-music composer. I’ve never done this kind of thing before – but then again, working with Richter’s film is not your usual kind of movie either. Ultimately though, the two parts came together to create a new work. Frankly, I don’t know if the film would be as interesting to watch as a silent

film. And I don’t intend what I’ve written musically to be presented as a concert piece by itself – I think that they very much mutually reinforce one another.

CAC You’ve long been closely associated with the visual arts scene in New York. Do you feel like there’s something about your music that is particularly suited to arts collaborations?

SR It’s certainly true that when I first came to public attention in New York and elsewhere in the 1960s and early 1970s, my major performances were at museums. The world premiere of *Drumming*, performed by Steve Reich and Musicians, was at the Museum of Modern Art, in its original movie theater in 1971. It had never been used for music before that except when John Cage presented a concert there in the 1940s. The premiere of *Four Organs* was at the Guggenheim Museum. *Pendulum Music*, performed by myself, Richard Serra, Bruce Nauman, Michael Snow and James Tenney was done at the Whitney in 1969. My ensemble gave the London premiere of *Tehillim* at the Hayward Gallery during the first show of Mark Rothko in the UK while the American premiere was in the Rothko Chapel in Houston, followed by the New York premiere in the 20th-century galleries of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

There was a real camaraderie on a personal, intellectual and artistic level in the New York arts community in the 1960s and 1970s. I lived on Duane Street and Richard Serra lived around the corner – Michael Snow just a few blocks away. When I gave the concerts at the Park Place Gallery run by Paula Cooper around 1967, Rauschenberg and the whole Judson Dance scene came. That was the context in which I was living. I’ve been married for 45 years to visual artist Beryl Korot, with whom I’ve collaborated on two video operas. So I have a long history of being connected with visual artists.

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About the artist



Gerhard Richter

Gerhard Richter (born 1932)

Artist Gerhard Richter's career spans six decades. In 1967, he won the Junger Westen art prize from the German city of Recklinghausen and has won numerous other prizes including the Golden Lion at the 47th Venice Biennale. He has shown at documenta 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. Richter's work has been featured in retrospectives including at the Tate Gallery (1991); the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bonn, Moderna Museet, Stockholm and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid (1993–94); and The Museum of Modern Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (2002–3). In 2011, Tate Modern presented the retrospective *Gerhard Richter: Panorama*, accompanied by the publication of the first volume of a *catalogue raisonné*. In 2017 Richter had his first solo exhibitions in the Czech Republic at the National Gallery, Prague, and Australia at Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane.

Gerhard Richter taught at the Staatliche Kunstakademie Düsseldorf from 1971 to 1994. He lives and works in Cologne.

Gerhard Richter: Music and Art

Tonight's film can be placed in the context of Richter's long-term interest in music. This interest has manifested itself in a variety of ways: a poster he designed for a Glenn Branca concert at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf in 1983; the cover of Sonic Youth's album *Daydream Nation* (1988), which features his earlier painting *Kerze* ('Candle'); and *City Life* (2002), a book that features a series of overpainted photographs in homage to Reich. Perhaps the two key works, though, are two cycles named for, and inspired by, a pair of composers from very different eras.

Bach (1992), which consists of four large-format abstract paintings, reflects Richter's lasting interest in the music of J S Bach, to which he listened as he created the works. In his normal practice, Richter uses many different ways of applying oil to canvas with a large squeegee. In this series, however, he used only strict horizontal and vertical lines, echoing the order and harmony that characterises much of Bach's music.

Fourteen years later, Richter completed *Cage* (2006), a cycle of six abstract paintings. Richter listened to John Cage's music while he painted the cycle, but the connection between these two artists runs more deeply. Just as many of Cage's works were created using chance procedures, such as one inspired by the *I Ching*, so Richter, in abstract paintings such as *Bach* and *Cage*, intentionally allows chance effects into his creative process. While he selects the colours that he applies to his squeegee, he can't fully regulate the trace left by the paint on the canvas, an experimental inclusion of controlled chance that echoes Cage's compositional ethos.

© Alex Poots and Hans Ulrich Obrist, co-curators, *Reich/Richter*

About the composer

Joy Blockenberg



Steve Reich

Steve Reich (born 1936)

Steve Reich's musical legacy has been influential on composers and mainstream musicians all over the world. His music is known for steady pulse, repetition and a fascination with canons; it combines rigorous structures with propulsive rhythms and seductive harmony and instrumental colour.

Born in New York and raised there and in California, Reich graduated with honours in philosophy from Cornell University in 1957. For the next two years he studied composition with Hall Overton, and from 1958 to 1961, he studied at the Juilliard School of Music with William Bergsma and Vincent Persichetti. Reich received his master's degree in music from Mills College in 1963, where he worked with Luciano Berio and Darius Milhaud. His studies have also included Balinese gamelan, African drumming (at the University of Ghana), and traditional forms of chanting of the Hebrew scriptures.

Different Trains and *Music for 18 Musicians*, as well as an album of his percussion works, have earned Grammy Awards, and *Double Sextet* won the Pulitzer Prize in 2009.

Reich's documentary video opera works – *The Cave* and *Three Tales*, made in collaboration with video artist Beryl Korot – have pushed the boundaries of the operatic medium and have been presented on four continents.

Reich's music has been performed by major orchestras and ensembles around the world, including the New York and Los Angeles Philharmonic orchestras; Boston, BBC, London, San Francisco and Sydney Symphony orchestras; London Sinfonietta; Kronos Quartet; Ensemble Modern; Ensemble Intercontemporain; Ensemble Signal; International Contemporary Ensemble; Bang on a Can All-Stars; Alarm Will Sound; and eighth blackbird. Several noted choreographers have created dances to his music, such as Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, Jiří Kylián, Jerome Robbins, Justin Peck, Wayne McGregor, Benjamin Millepied and Christopher Wheeldon.

Reich was awarded the Gold Medal in Music by the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2012. He has been named Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in France, as well as a member of the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts. His honours include the Grand Prix artistique de la Fondation Simone et Cino Del Duca in Paris, the Praemium Imperiale in Tokyo, the Polar Music Prize in Stockholm, the BBVA Award in Madrid, the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale, and the 2016 Nemmers Prize in Music Composition from Northwestern University, as well as the Schuman Award from Columbia University, the Montgomery Fellowship from Dartmouth College and the Regent's Lectureship at the University of California at Berkeley. He has received honorary doctorates from the Royal College of Music, the Juilliard School, the Liszt Academy in Budapest, and the New England Conservatory of Music, among others.

In November last year Susanna Mälkki led the Los Angeles Philharmonic in the world premiere of Reich's *Music for Ensemble and Orchestra*. His first orchestral work in over 30 years, the piece is an extension of the Baroque *concerto grosso*, featuring a group of 20 soloists pulled from the orchestra's ranks. This season, the work continues to tour to Europe and within the USA. Another recent work, *Reich/Richter*, tours across the UK and Europe, starting with tonight's European premiere.

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About the performers

Marco Borggreve



Colin Currie

Colin Currie conductor

Colin Currie is a solo and chamber artist at the peak of his powers. He champions new music at the highest level and is the soloist of choice for many of today's foremost composers, as well as performing regularly with the world's leading orchestras and conductors.

His commitment to commissioning and creating new music was recognised by the Royal Philharmonic Society, which awarded him the 2015 Instrumentalist Award. From his earliest years he forged a pioneering path in creating new music for percussion, winning the Royal Philharmonic Society Young Artist Award in 2000 and receiving a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award in 2005. He has premiered works by composers such as Steve Reich, Elliott Carter, Louis Andriessen, HK Gruber, Mark-Anthony Turnage, Sir James MacMillan, Brett Dean, Sir Harrison Birtwistle, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Helen Grime, Jennifer Higdon, Kalevi Aho, Rolf Wallin, Kurt Schwertsik, Andrew Norman, Julia Wolfe and Nico Muhly. In the coming season he will premiere new works by Bruno Mantovani, Luke Bedford and Andy Akiho.

In 2017 he launched Colin Currie Records, in conjunction with LSO Live, as a platform for recording his diverse projects. Its first release was the Colin Currie Group's debut recording, Steve Reich's *Drumming*, which was enthusiastically received. Last year he released *The Scene of the Crime* with Håkan Hardenberger, which was followed in spring 2019 by *Colin Currie & Steve Reich Live at Fondation Louis Vuitton*.

Highlights of this season include the world premiere of Bruno Mantovani's Percussion Concerto with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France under Mikko Franck in April. He also premieres a new concerto by Luke Bedford with the Philharmonia Orchestra, Andy Akiho's new Percussion Concerto with the Oregon Symphony Orchestra, and will give the UK premiere of Sofia Gubaidulina's *Glorious Percussion* at the Edinburgh Festival with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra under Thomas Dausgaard and percussionists from the Colin Currie Group. Another major season highlight is tonight's conducting debut, with Britten Sinfonia in the European premiere of Steve Reich's *Reich/Richter*.

Colin Currie's other orchestral engagements include appearances with the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, MDR Leipzig, Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg, Swedish Chamber and Scottish Chamber orchestras, Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz and Orquesta Filarmónica de Gran Canaria. He also collaborates with chamber partners, including Nicolas Hodges, Antoine Tamestit, the JACK Quartet and his own Colin Currie Quartet, for performances at the Vienna Konzerthaus, de Doelen, Wigmore Hall, LSO St Luke's, Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, Kings Place and the Southbank Centre.

He formed the Colin Currie Group in 2006 to celebrate the music of Steve Reich and they made an acclaimed debut at the BBC Proms. Since then, with Reich's personal endorsement Colin Currie and his ensemble have taken on the role of ambassadors of *Drumming*, which they have performed at many venues and festivals internationally. The Colin Currie Group return to the Southbank Centre in December for four performances of *Drumming* at the Hayward Gallery, where the work received its world premiere nearly 50 years ago.

Colin Currie is Artist-in-Association at the Southbank Centre, where he was the focus of a major percussion festival, Metal Wood Skin, in 2014 and where he continues to perform every season.

Corinna Belz filmmaker

Corinna Belz studied philosophy, art history and media sciences at the Universities of Cologne and Berlin. She gained formative experience as an assistant director to veteran documentarian Helga Reidemeister and auteur feature filmmaker Rudolf Thome.

She has written and directed numerous films, including *Other American Voices* (2002) and *Peter Handke: In The Woods, Might Be Late* (2016). *The Cologne Cathedral Window* (2007), Belz's first collaboration with Gerhard Richter, won a gold World Media Award in the category Art Documentaries. Her second film on the artist's work, *Gerhard Richter Painting* (2011) was awarded the top German national film accolade, the Golden Lola.

Corinna Belz lives in Cologne and Berlin.

Britten Sinfonia

Just over 25 years ago, Britten Sinfonia was established as a bold reimagining of the conventional image of an orchestra. A flexible ensemble comprising the UK's leading soloists and chamber musicians came together with a unique vision: to collapse the boundaries between old and new music; to collaborate with composers, conductors and guest artists across the arts, focusing on the musicians rather than following the vision of a principal conductor; and to create involving, intelligent music events that both audiences and performers experience with an unusual intensity.

The orchestra is named after Benjamin Britten, in part a homage to its chosen home of the East of England, where Britten's roots were also strong. But Britten Sinfonia also embodies its namesake's ethos. Its projects are characterised by a rich diversity of influences and artistic collaborators, and always underpinned by a commitment to uncompromising quality, whether the orchestra is performing at New York's Lincoln

Center or in Lincolnshire's Crowland Abbey. Britten Sinfonia musicians are deeply rooted in the communities with which they work, with an underlying philosophy of finding ways to reach even the most excluded individuals and groups.

Today Britten Sinfonia is heralded as one of the world's leading ensembles. It is an Associate Ensemble here at the Barbican, Resident Orchestra at Saffron Hall in Essex and has residencies in Norwich and Cambridge. It presents an annual chamber music series at the Wigmore Hall and appears regularly at major UK festivals, including the Aldeburgh, Brighton and Norfolk and Norwich festivals and the BBC Proms. Over the past year the orchestra has broadcast live to more than a million people worldwide from the Sistine Chapel and toured to Amsterdam, Paris and Bilbao. This season it tours to the USA, Mexico, China and much of Europe. It is a BBC Radio 3 Broadcast Partner and has award-winning recordings on the Hyperion and Harmonia Mundi labels.

Recent and current collaborators include Keaton Henson, dancer/choreographer Pam Tanowitz and theatre director Ivo van Hove, with commissions from Thomas Adès, Gerald Barry, Shiva Feshareki, Emily Howard, Brad Mehldau and Mark-Anthony Turnage. The orchestra is also a commissioning partner in this evening's European premiere of *Reich/Richter*.

Outside the concert hall, Britten Sinfonia musicians work on creative and therapeutic projects with pre-school children, teenagers, young carers, people suffering from dementia, life-time prisoners and older people at risk of isolation. The orchestra's annual OPUS competition offers unpublished composers the chance to receive a professional commission and unearth new, original and exciting UK compositional talent. Members of Britten Sinfonia Academy, the orchestra's youth chamber ensemble for talented young performers, have performed in museums, improvised with laptop artists, led family workshops and appeared at the Latitude Festival.

Britten Sinfonia

Violin 1

Thomas Gould
leader
Róisín Walters
Beatrix Lovejoy

Violin 2

Nicola Goldscheider

Viola

Clare Finnimore
Sascha Bota

Cello

Caroline Dearnley
Ben Chappell

Double Bass/ Bass Guitar

Roger Linley

Flute

Thomas Hancox
Sarah O'Flynn

Oboe

Peter Facer
Emma Feilding

Clarinet

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Oliver Pashley

Percussion

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