

COLIN
CURRIE
RECORDS

STEVE REICH: THE SEXTETS



COLIN CURRIE GROUP

“The Colin Currie Group continues to give outstanding performances and make great recordings of more and more of my music. Colin himself not only performs but frequently conducts my larger scale works.

This recording of ‘The Sextets’ presents four pieces that are all for different combinations of instruments that create different kinds of music – compare *Six Marimbas* to *Double Sextet* for instance. What is common here is an absolutely top level of performance.”

Steve Reich, September 2025

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Steve Reich Sextet

1	I. Crotchet = 192	11:36
2	II. Crotchet = 96	04:17
3	III. Crotchet = 64	02:21
4	IV. Crotchet = 96	03:27
5	V. Crotchet = 192	06:13

Steve Reich Double Sextet

6	I. Fast	08:57
7	II. Slow	06:59
8	III. Fast	07:02

9	Steve Reich Six Marimbas	22:02
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10	Steve Reich Dance Patterns	06:25
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Total **79:19**

Colin Currie

Colin Currie has made his name as a champion of new music for percussion, hailed as being “at the summit of percussion performance today” (*Gramophone*).

Currie is the soloist of choice for many of today’s foremost composers, conductors and orchestras and is recognised for his commitment to new music, having given the world premiere performances of countless concertos, solo and chamber works. Currie launched Colin Currie Records in 2017, in collaboration with LSO Live, as a platform for recording his diverse projects.

www.colincurrie.com

Colin Currie Group

Colin Currie Group is a virtuosic ensemble that specialises in the music of Steve Reich. Their performances of Reich’s music have been hailed by the composer as “the best I’ve ever heard”.

Led by Colin Currie (“the world’s finest and most daring percussionist”, *The Spectator*), the hand-picked ensemble was formed in 2006 for a performance of *Drumming* at the BBC Proms to celebrate Reich’s 70th birthday.

A major highlight of recent seasons was the critically acclaimed world premiere in 2021 of Reich’s *Traveler’s Prayer*, which the Group toured to The Concertgebouw, Royal Festival Hall, Elbphilharmonie, Paris Philharmonie, Carnegie Hall, CAL Performances and Tokyo Opera City.

www.colincurriegrup.com

Colin Currie Group

Colin Currie *Artistic Director, Conductor & Percussion*

Owen Gunnell *Percussion*

Adrian Spillett *Percussion*

Sam Walton *Percussion*

Catherine Ring *Percussion*

George Barton *Percussion*

Philip Moore *Piano*

Siwan Rhys *Piano*

Joseph Havlat *Piano*

Rowland Sutherland *Flute*

Helen Whitaker *Flute*

Emma Burgess *Clarinet*

Michelle Hromin *Clarinet*

Jonathan Morton *Violin*

Clio Gould *Violin*

Robin Michael *Cello*

Zoe Martlew *Cello*



STEVE REICH: THE SEXTETS

These recordings constitute the fourth album on my record label devoted to the music of Steve Reich. It brings together some of his most significant music for chamber ensembles, all residing under the neat numerical umbrella of sextet forces.

Whilst we are running the numbers, it is also worth mentioning that the release of this album coincides with the 20th anniversary of the Colin Currie Group and, extraordinarily enough, the 90th birthday of the composer who brought us all together.

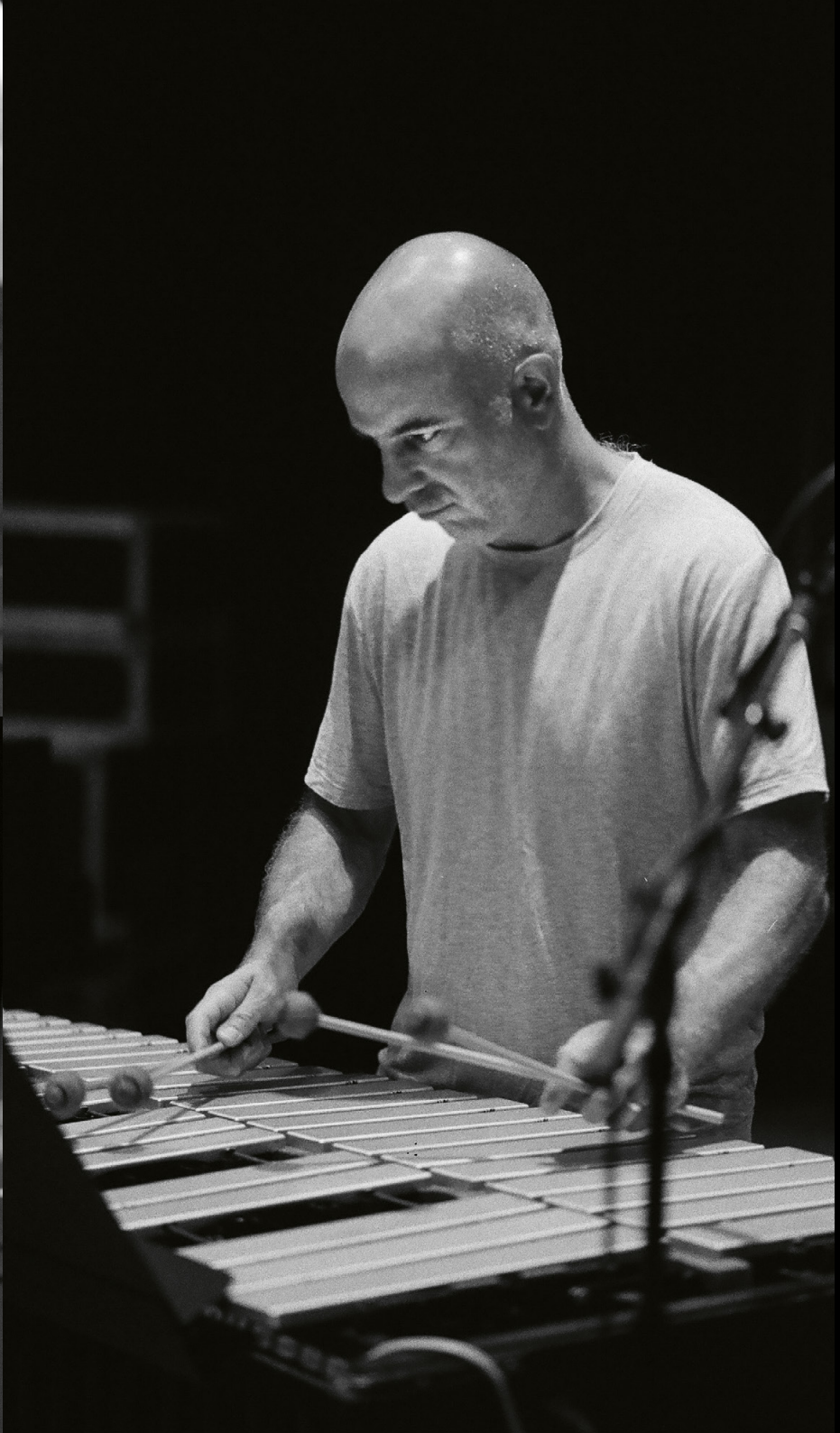
To that end, I would like to state my extreme gratitude once again to Steve, for all his encouragement and trust as the group has developed and expanded over these years. To have had his guidance and insight, in such a huge variety of contexts and repertoire, has helped us define our musical characteristics. At the time of writing this note he is even writing his third new work which will be premiered by my ensemble. The honour is truly ours.

That brings me to the superlative nature of the group itself, a bristling bundle of characters, who all care so deeply for this music and its expansion. The more we play together, the greater and grander the music seems, each connection with the repertoire the purest privilege.

Collectively, these sextets entrance and uplift, from the scintillating and iconic *Sextet*, to the powerful and poignant *Double Sextet*, the time-bending *Six Marimbas*, and our own fresh take on a lesser-known gem, entitled *Dance Patterns*.

Of course, 'Dance' and 'Patterns' are two key values that could be associated with this music. Yet, no words can truly and fully encapsulate the uplifting emotional magic of these great works. Let us cherish and celebrate them as the great man reaches another milestone in his unparalleled lifespan of influence and inspiration.

Colin Currie, September 2025





STEVE REICH: SEXTET (1984, rev. 1985)

2 keyboard players (2 pianos and 2 synthesizers), and
4 percussionists (3 marimbas, 2 vibraphones [bowed],
2 bass drums, crotales, click sticks, tam-tam)

World premiere 19 December 1984, Centre Georges
Pompidou, Paris, France. Performed by NEXUS.

Sextet was commissioned by Laura Dean Dancers and Musicians and by the French Government for the Nexus Percussion Ensemble. The first performance, under the title *Music for percussion and Keyboards*, was given at the Centre Pompidou in Paris on 19 December 1984 by Nexus, with guest artists playing keyboards. The last movement was then revised in January 1985 and the title shortened to *Sextet*. The American premiere was presented by Laura Dean Dancers and Musicians at Brooklyn Academy of Music's New Wave Festival on 31 October 1985 as the music for Ms. Dean's *Impact*. The American concert premiere by Steve Reich and Musicians was performed at the Great Performers Series at Avery Fisher Hall on 20 January 1986.

Sextet (1985) for 4 percussionists and 2 keyboard players is scored for 3 marimbas, 2 vibraphones,

2 bass drums, crotales, sticks, tam-tam, 2 pianos and 2 synthesizers. The duration is about 28 minutes.

The work is in five movements played without pause. The relationship of the five movements is that of an arch form A-B-C-B-A. The first and last movements are fast, the second and fourth moderate and the third, slow. Changes of tempo are made abruptly at the beginning of new movements by metric modulation to either get slower or faster. Movements are also organised harmonically with the chord cycle for the first and fifth, another cycle for the second and fourth, and yet another for the third. The harmonies used – largely dominant chords with added tones, creating a somewhat darker, chromatic and more varied harmonic language – were suggested by *The Desert Music* (1984).

Percussion instruments mostly produce sounds of relatively short duration. In this piece I was interested in overcoming that limitation. The use of the bowed vibraphone, not merely as a passing effect, but as a basic instrumental voice in the second movement, was one means of getting long continuous sounds not possible with piano. The mallet instruments (marimba, vibraphone, etc.) are basically instruments of high and middle register without a low range. To overcome this limit the bass drum was used, doubling the piano or synthesizer played in their lower register, particularly in the second, third and fourth movements.

Compositional techniques used include some introduced in my music as early as *Drumming* in 1971. In particular, the substitution of beats for rests to “build-up” a canon between two or more identical instruments playing the same repeating pattern is used extensively in the first and last movements. Sudden change of rhythmic position (or phase) of one voice in an overall repeating contrapuntal web first occurs in my *Six Pianos* of 1973 and occurs throughout this work. Double canons, where one canon moves slowly (the bowed vibraphones) and the second moves quickly (the pianos), first appear in my music in *Octet* of 1979. Techniques influenced by African music, where the basic ambiguity in meters of 12 beats is between 3 groups of 4 and 4 groups of 3, appear in the third and fifth movements. A rhythmically ambiguous pattern is played by vibraphones in the third movement, but at a much faster tempo. The result is to change the perception of what is in fact not changing. Another related, more recent technique, appearing near the end of the fourth movement, is to gradually remove the melodic material in the synthesizers leaving the accompaniment of the 2 vibraphones to become the new melodic focus. Similarly the accompaniment in the piano in the second movement becomes the melody for the synthesizer in the fourth movement. The ambiguity here is between which is melody and which is accompaniment. In music, which uses a great deal of repetition I believe it is precisely these kinds of ambiguities that give vitality and life.

Steve Reich





STEVE REICH: DOUBLE SEXTET (2007)

2 flutes, 2 clarinets, 2 violins, 2 cellos,
2 vibraphones and 2 pianos

World premiere 26 March 2008, University of Richmond,
Richmond, VA, USA. Performed by Eighth Blackbird.

There are two identical sextets in *Double Sextet*. Each one is comprised of flute, clarinet, vibraphone, piano, violin and cello. Doubling the instrumentation was done so that, as in so many of my earlier works, two identical instruments could interlock to produce one overall pattern. For example, in this piece you will hear the pianos and vibes interlocking in a highly rhythmic way to drive the rest of the ensemble.

The piece can be played in two ways; either with 12 musicians, or with six playing against a recording of themselves.

The idea of a single player playing against a recording of themselves goes all the way back to *Violin Phase* of 1967 and extends through *Vermont Counterpoint* (1982), *New York Counterpoint* (1985), *Electric Counterpoint*

(1987) and *Cello Counterpoint* (2003). The expansion of this idea to an entire chamber ensemble playing against pre-recordings of themselves begins with *Different Trains* (1988) and continues with *Triple Quartet* (1999) and now to *Double Sextet*. By doubling an entire chamber ensemble one creates the possibility for multiple simultaneous contrapuntal webs of identical instruments. In *Different Trains* and *Triple Quartet* all instruments are strings to produce one large string fabric. In *Double Sextet* there is more timbral variety through the interlocking of six different pairs of percussion, string and wind instruments.

The piece is in three movements – fast, slow, fast – and within each movement there are four harmonic sections built around the keys of D, F, Ab and B or their relative minor keys b, d, f and g#. As in almost all my music, modulations from one key to the next are sudden, clearly setting off each new section.

Double Sextet is about 22 minutes long and was completed in October 2007. It was commissioned by Eighth Blackbird and received its world premiere by that group at the University of Richmond in Virginia on March 26, 2008.

Steve Reich





STEVE REICH: SIX MARIMBAS (1986)

transcription of *Six Pianos* (1973) for
six marimbas by James Preiss

World premiere 20 April 1987, Alice Tully Hall,
New York, NY, USA. Performed by Steve Reich and
Musicians, members of Manhattan Marimba Quartet,
and members of NEXUS.

Six Marimbas, composed in 1986, is a rescoring for
marimbas of my earlier *Six Pianos* (1973). The idea to
rescore came from my friend, the percussionist James
Preiss, who has been a member of my ensemble since
1971 and also contributed the hand and mallet alterations
that are used in this score.

The piece begins with three marimbas playing the same
eight beat rhythmic pattern, but with different notes
for each marimba. One of the other marimbas begins
to gradually build up the exact pattern of one of the
marimbas that is already playing by putting the notes of
the fifth beat on the seventh beat, then putting the notes
of the first beat on the third beat, and so on, reconstructing
the same pattern with the same notes, but two beats

out of phase. When this canonic relationship has been
fully constructed, the two other marimbas double some
of the many melodic patterns resulting from this four
marimba relationship. By gradually increasing their volume
they bring these resulting patterns up to the surface of
the music; then, by lowering the volume, they slowly
return them to the overall contrapuntal web, in which
the listener can hear them continuing along with many
others in the ongoing four marimba relationship.

This process of rhythmic construction followed by
doubling the resulting patterns is then continued in the
three sections of the piece that are marked by changes
of mode and a gradually higher position on the marimba,
the first in D-flat major, the second in E-flat Dorian, and
the third in B-flat natural minor [Aeolian mode, beginning
on B-flat].

Steve Reich



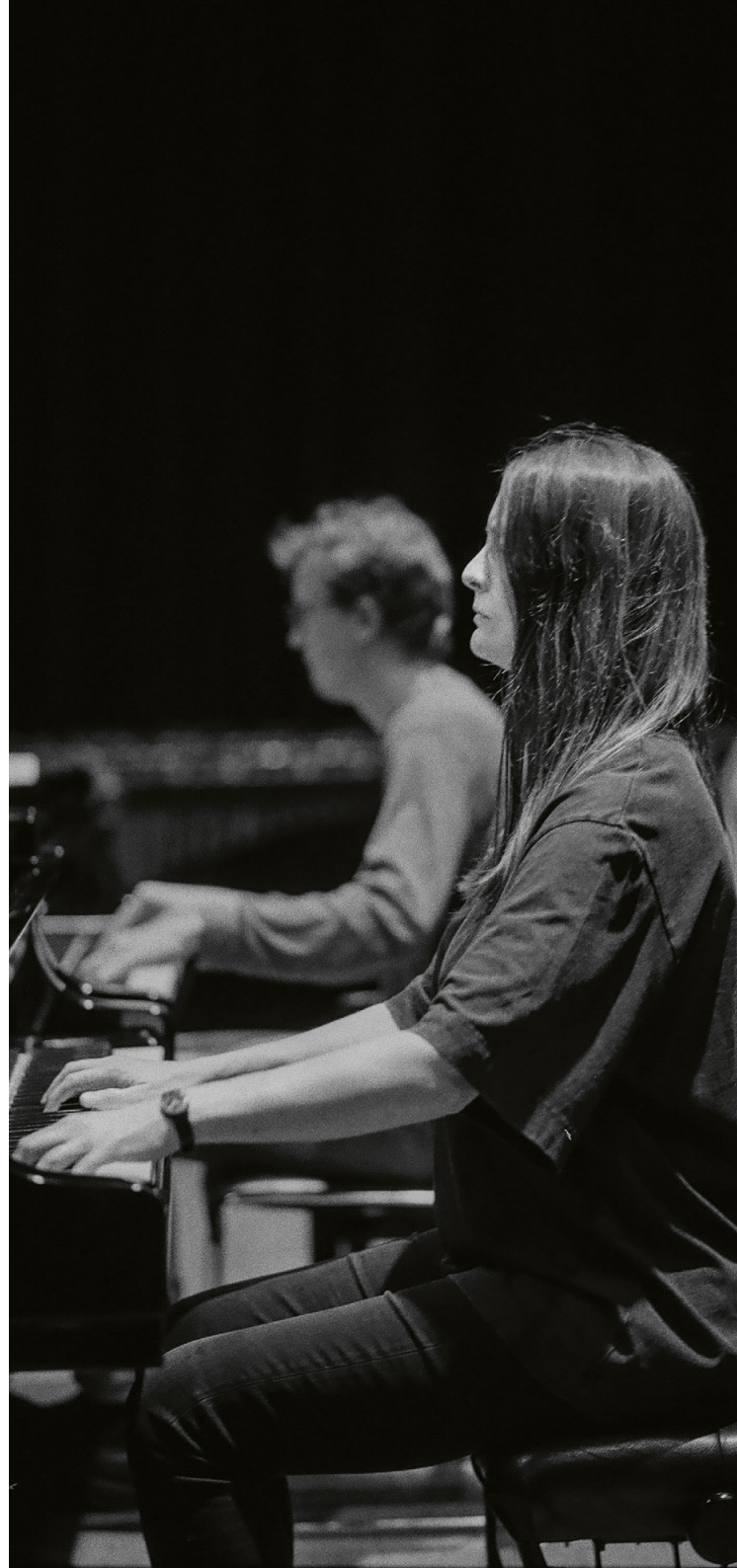
STEVE REICH: DANCE PATTERNS (2002)

2 xylophones, 2 vibraphones, 2 pianos

World premiere 13 March 2003, Palais des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles, Belgium. Performed by Ictus Ensemble and Rosas Dance Company, with choreography by Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker.

Dance Patterns (2002) was composed for choreographer Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker and filmmaker Thierry de Mey. De Mey had completed an hour-long film of de Keersmaeker's choreography entitled *Counterphrases* and asked several composers to write a five- or six-minute piece for a completed section of the film. The pieces were performed live, while the film was being shown, by the Ictus Ensemble, who commissioned all the music. *Dance Patterns* is scored for two pianos, two vibraphones, and two xylophones, and is about six minutes in duration.

Steve Reich



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Project Management Catherine Gibbs & Eleanor Philpott with Intermusica Artists' Management Ltd

Executive Producer Ian Dearden

Recording Engineer Phil Jones

Mixing & Mastering Ian Dearden, David Sheppard & Daniel Halford for Sound Intermedia

Recording Consultant Andy Doe

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