

SATURDAY 4 JULY

DRUMMING
Steve Reich
PERFORMED
BY COLIN CURRIE GROUP

© BOLDTENDENCIES

Steve Reich

Drumming

for ensemble with voices

Colin Currie - Artistic director/percussion

Owen Gunnell - Percussion

George Barton - Percussion

Catherine Ring - Percussion

Richard Benjafield - Percussion

Matthew Farthing - Percussion

Iris van den Bos - Percussion

Jonathan Phillips - Percussion

Jacob Brown - Percussion

Rowland Sutherland - Piccolo

Ali Ponsford-Hill - Vocals

Katy Hill - Vocals

60 minutes with no intermission.

The World Premiere of *Drumming* took place 12 March 1971 at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, played by Steve Reich and Musicians.

It is perhaps fitting, when presenting a work of such mathematical splendour to consider some of the numbers attached to tonight's performance. For tonight, we have 20/20/20 vision, as we mark 20 years since the formation of my ensemble, 20 years since I first opened the score of *Drumming* and with neat symmetry 20 triumphant years of Bold Tendencies.

Performing the music of Steve Reich in this place and for this audience is a unique thrill for my group. We always look forward with great excitement to the unique connection we can form with the listeners in this grandly informal and intimate space. We feel the audience as being the central part of our performances here, and honoured to think of Bold Tendencies as an artistic partner where we can dream big and play proud.

Lastly on the numbers game, it is, as remarkable as it sounds, Steve Reich's 90th birthday year, and the celebrations begin now as we mark his towering genius and transcendental effect on the direction of music. Happy Anniversaries to one and all, and long may this music live on!

Colin Currie

For one year, between the fall of 1970 and the fall of 1971, I worked on what turned out to be the longest piece I have ever composed. *Drumming* lasts from 55 to 75 minutes (depending on the number of repeats played) and is divided into four parts that are performed without pause. The first part is for four pairs of tuned bongo drums, stand-mounted and played with sticks; the second, for three marimbas played by nine players together with two women's voices; the third, for three glockenspiels played by four players together with whistling and piccolo; and the fourth section is for all these instruments and voices combined.

In the context of my own music, *Drumming* is the final expansion and refinement of the phasing process, as well as the first use of four new techniques: (1) the process of gradually substituting beats for rests (or rests for beats); (2) the gradual changing of timbre while rhythm and pitch remain constant; (3) the simultaneous combination of instruments of different timbre; and (4) the use of the human voice to become part of the musical ensemble by imitating the exact sound of the instruments.

Drumming begins with two drummers building up the basic rhythmic pattern of the entire piece from a single drum beat, played in a cycle of 12 beats with rests on all the other beats. Gradually additional drumbeats are substituted for the rests, one at a time, until the pattern is completed.

The reduction process is simply the reverse where rests are gradually substituted for the beats, one at a time, until only a single beat remains.

The sections are joined together by the new instruments doubling the exact pattern of the instruments already playing. At the end of the drum section (Part 1), three drummers are joined by three marimba players who enter softly playing the same pattern; the drummers gradually fade out so that the same rhythm and pitches are maintained with a gradual change of timbre. At the end of the marimba section (Part 2), three marimbas played in their highest range are doubled by three glockenspiels in their lowest range so that again, rhythm and pitch are maintained while timbre changes. In the last section of *Drumming*, all instruments and voices are combined simultaneously (for the first time in my music) and the overall sound becomes considerably richer.

The voices in *Drumming* do not sing words, but precisely imitate the sound of the instruments. The women's voices sing patterns resulting from the combination of two or more marimbas playing identical repeating pattern, one of more quarter notes out of phase with each other. By exactly imitating the sound of the instruments, and by gradually fading the patterns in and out, the singers cause them to slowly rise to the surface of the music and then fade back into it, allowing the listener to hear these patterns sounding

in the instruments themselves. For the marimbas, the female voice was needed; for the glockenspiels, the high range of the instrument necessitated whistling, and in its extremely high range, the piccolo.

The sections, then, are not set off from each other by changes of key, the traditional means of gaining extended length in Western music. *Drumming* demonstrates the possibility of maintaining the same key for quite a while if there are instead considerable rhythmic developments together with occasional, but complete, changes of timbre to supply variety.

I am often asked what influence my visit to Africa in summer of 1970 had on *Drumming*. The answer is encouragement, confirmation, and learning from another musical culture. It encouraged my natural inclination towards and training in percussion. I started studying snare drum at the age of 14. And, it confirmed my intuition that acoustic instruments could be used to produce music that was genuinely richer in sound than that produced with electronic instruments.

My learning about African drumming began when, as a college student, I heard recordings. Then, in 1963, I read some of A.M. Jones's *Studies in African Music* where he, with Desmond Tay, a Ghanaian master drummer, made the first accurate scores of several Ghanaian traditional pieces

by tapping metal pencils on metal plates on Jones's drum pattern recorder. These scores showed that the music was made of short repeating patterns, generally of two, three, four, six, or 12 beats, played simultaneously but so that their downbeats did not coincide. This struck me as a radically different way of organizing music not found in the West, and also reminded me of the many rhythmic ambiguities inherent in subdivisions of 12. Still later, I took a few lessons with Alfred Ladzepko, another Ewe master drummer, who was working with Nicholas England at Columbia University.

Then, in 1970 the last piece I wrote and performed before my trip to Ghana was *Phase Patterns*, for four electric organs. It was built entirely out of the snare drum hand alternation rudiment, paradiddle: LRLRLRR. During rehearsal one of the musicians in my ensemble joked, "You're drumming on the keyboard, how about drumming on the drums?" and it struck me as a very sound comment.

Finally, in the summer of 1970, I traveled to Ghana to study drumming firsthand. While there I took daily lessons from Ghanaian master drummers, particularly from the Ewe people, recorded them, transcribed the patterns and their relationships into Western notation and eventually they were published.

When I returned home, the effect of my visit turned out to be confirmation of gradually shifting phase relations between identical repeating patterns that I had used in *Piano Phase* and *Violin Phase* in 1967, but now with strong encouragement to develop these ideas further by returning to my own background in percussion. Additionally, I had learned that complex rhythmic counterpoint had a long history in Africa and, as I learned soon after, in Indonesia when I studied Balinese gamelan with Balinese teachers at the American Society for Eastern Arts in Berkeley in 1974.

As mentioned earlier, in the context of my own music, *Drumming* is the final expansion and refinement of the phasing process, a process discovered with tape loops that does not appear elsewhere in non-Western or Western music. *Drumming* also has only one basic rhythmic pattern throughout. This pattern undergoes changes of phase position, pitch, and timbre, but all the performers play this pattern, or some part of it, throughout the entire piece.

Steve Reich

Upcoming Live Events

Saturday 11 July

Piano Music 2015-2026 by Mica Levi

Performed by Eliza McCarthy

including the World Premiere of a new work.

Composer and musician Mica Levi and their long-standing collaborator pianist Eliza McCarthy met 12 years ago. The two work closely together - a process of open exchange of scores, sketches, snippets, provocations and directions. This programme - including new music selected specially for the presentation - reflects this dynamic. Euphoria in all its guises can be found in Levi's work and in McCarthy's playing - from the understated and private, to spacious, timeless enveloping release; held and hidden tension to longing for liberation - together the sonic experience is at once jack-in-the box and Pandora's box: bursts of untethered assertiveness held by unreal poise.

Saturday 18 July at 7.30pm

Ben Okri *The Magic Lamp*

Ben Okri, one of the foremost authors of our time and a Booker Prize-winner, grew up in Peckham and attended John Donne Primary School. We are honoured that he is joining us in person for a performative reading celebrating and illuminating his work across more than 40 years of

magnificent, uncategorizable writing. Performing alongside Okri himself are a cast of local children and young people led by poet and Bold Tendencies Facilitator Alfiah Jade Brown to explore Okri's unique "dream logic", what he calls the "philosophical conundrum...what is reality?", as well as the political, spiritual and environmental dimensions of his work. Okri's novel *Astonishing the Gods* (1995) was chosen by the BBC as one of the 100 books that changed our world. He is acclaimed nationally and internationally and in 2023 was knighted for services to literature.

Wednesday 22 July - Saturday 25 July

Oona Doherty *Life starts at 40*

Bold Tendencies presents *Life starts at 40*, a comprehensive programme of work by this award-winning choreographer in her 40th birthday year, celebrating a decade of her groundbreaking practice and including the World Premiere of a full-length new commission *Leather Jacket*. Deploying dance as powerful socio-political commentary and engagement, Oona Doherty's tough, uncompromising work challenges and reframes the dance world, her distinctive, visceral creations driven by her desire to craft and share experiences.

Upcoming Creative Learning Opportunities

BOLD FAMILY DAYS

Sunday 5 July, Sunday 2 August, Sunday 6 September

ASK THE ARTIST for School Groups

with Emma Hart

Thursday 9 July

PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITY for 12-18 y/os

with Ben Okri

Saturday 18 July

ASK THE ARTIST for 13-17 y/os

with Louis Morlae

Wednesday 29 July

BACKSTAGE PASS for families and young people

with Isata Kanneh-Mason

Thursday 30 July

CREATIVE PARTNERSHIP for 13-16 y/os

in collaboration with Groundwork's wellbeing hub The Nest

Wednesdays 13 July - 27 August

Get involved: community@boldtendencies.com

Our Concrete Concert Hall deliberately preserves the original raw fabric of the building and defies traditional categorization.

These peculiar conditions allow for the dismantling of established boundaries between audience and performer, stage and seat over 40,000 sq ft of space.

Tickets are priced between £10 and £25 making them visible and available to the broadest audiences, and to encourage newcomers and remove barriers to access.

Offering unrivalled proximity to artists and their work, a night out at Bold Tendencies is inspiring, sometimes transformative. Equally a daytime visit, where our Creative Learning initiatives bring the artists and their work up closer than even the audience gets, can change lives.

Every event at Bold Tendencies is subsidised by an average of 80%. We also offer 100% subsidised guest tickets through our community ticketing programme. We are committed to making our Live Programme welcoming and accessible to our local communities.

These tickets are shared via local partners and made available to those taking part in our Creative Learning initiatives like Backstage Pass and Public Rehearsals.

To continue and further Bold Tendencies' ambition and creativity, we are seeking your support. Our funding does not come from the government but from self-generated revenue, trusts and foundations, and the generosity of our friends and supporters.

Please consider joining
our Founding Friends and
Commissioning Circles,
or make a one-time donation.



Bold Tendencies is a world of its own.

Social force and memory palace, it is a place of magical transformation unique in people's hearts. Bold Tendencies falls into the category of a non-profit arts organisation, but it is unusual in that it covers a very wide spectrum of the arts, it offers a specific visual connection between people, place and city and learning is at the heart of what it does.

Bold Tendencies moves the needle. It builds communities, opening up artists and ideas to broad and popular appeal, committed to doing exceptional, uncompromising work. Bold Tendencies brings people together. It is a system of opportunity driven by generosity of spirit, exercising the right to joy and imagination, instigating propulsive, risk-taking projects that lead the way.

Bold Tendencies offers the extraordinary. Whether for audiences, collaborators, supporters or for our people it offers memories and meaning, ambition and adventure, belonging and pride, learning and confidence. Bold Tendencies is a singular place connected in multiple ways. Each Artistic Programme brings to life a universal idea. A series of responses to an annual theme, a summer season engaging with one of life's 'big questions' across a broad range of disciplines. Completely open, Bold Tendencies brings people together. The joy of being welcome. Up there. In the air.

Bold Tendencies 20th Anniversary Season

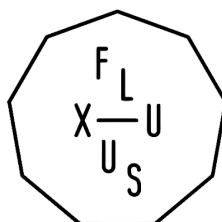
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Janine Catalano

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Abbie Heilmann

Karen Roberts

Susan Spindler & Peter Brown

Malcom Temple

Roxane Zand

& those who wish to remain anonymous.

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