

kuniko plays reich



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steve reich (b. 1936)

electric counterpoint

version for percussions (1987/2009)

arr. for steel pans, vibraphone & marimba and pre-recorded tape (arr. kuniko)

kuniko *solo percussions*

- 1 movement i : fast 6:53
- 2 movement ii : slow 3:22
- 3 movement iii : fast 4:37

recorded at blackbird studio, nashville, u.s.a. from 28-29 january 2009

engineered by george massenburg

assistant engineer, kazuri arai

stereo mixing by akira fukada

surround mixing by seigen ono at saidera mastering, tokyo, japan

- 4 six marimbas counterpoint (1986/2010) 16:26

arr. for solo marimba and pre-recorded tape (arr. kuniko)

kuniko *solo marimba*

recorded at saidera mastering, tokyo, japan from 24-25 november 2009

engineered by seigen ono

stereo & surround mixing by seigen ono at saidera mastering, tokyo, japan

- 5 vermont counterpoint

version for vibraphone (1982/2010) 9:48

arr. for vibraphone and pre-recorded tape (arr. kuniko)

kuniko *solo vibraphone*

recorded at nagoya university of arts, school of music, nagoya, japan

from 28-29 march 2010

stereo & surround mixing by kazuya nagae





all tracks were mastered by bastiaan kuijt at bk audio, the netherlands
sacd authoring by bastiaan kuijt at bk audio, the netherlands
all original music and supervision by steve reich
arranged, performed and produced by kuniko in consultation with steve reich
photographs of kuniko by michiyuki ohba / photograph of steve reich by jeffrey herman
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pearl musical instruments, saito musical instruments

i would like to acknowledge my heartfelt appreciation to steve reich who extended his
generosity and allowed me to work on these new arrangements of his great masterpieces.
thanks to this fine company of engineers: george massenburg, akira fukada, seigen ono and
kazuya nagae who really strived to make this recording happen with their uncompromising
dedication to this project.

lastly, i want to sincerely thank philip hobbs and linn records for being the home of this work.

www.kuniko-kato.net

This album contains my arrangements of Steve Reich's masterpieces from the 1980s. It contains Electric Counterpoint (1987), Six Marimbas (1986) and Vermont Counterpoint (1982). I worked on these arrangements during 2009 and 2010. They are arranged for solo percussion and pre-recorded tape for live performance. Each of these pieces is the first arrangement of their kind in the world. All three pieces were solo overdubbed; however I played through all the parts from the beginning to the end, without using loops or quantisation in order to emphasise the live atmosphere in ensemble performance. All of the mixings are based on my concepts and I closely collaborated with each recording engineer.

meeting steve reich

During my time in Belgium, I performed with the contemporary music group Ensemble ICTUS and we played many of Steve Reich's pieces. During an important rehearsal ahead of a major concert performing his Tehillim and City Life compositions at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, Steve appeared wearing jeans and a cap; this was the first time I met the great composer, Steve Reich. While I was playing the percussion part of City Life his eyes focused on my playing and afterwards he complimented me, saying, *'This small girl plays so powerfully'*. On the day of the concert we were still experiencing the very intense atmosphere his presence brought to the rehearsal, and keeping with this high emotion, we went on stage with Steve. Naturally, the concert was fantastic and I enjoyed playing Piece of Wood with him.

Since this concert Ensemble ICTUS has continued to perform Steve's repertoire, including masterpieces such as Drumming, Music for 18 Musicians and Six Marimbas. Ensemble ICTUS has also collaborated closely with the dance company Rosas, which has included Steve's works in their repertoire. Together with Ensemble ICTUS and Rosas, I had the opportunity to travel to many festivals in several countries and perform Steve Reich's music. When I decided to leave Europe and move my base to the United States, I began focusing on my solo activities. After this break from ensemble performance, I had the desire to play Steve's pieces again and I began to think of how I could challenge what I am able to do in my solo works.

electric counterpoint version for percussions

Electric Counterpoint (1987) was written for the legendary guitarist Pat Metheny and was premiered at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York. In 2009 I began thinking about playing this piece in my solo project Steel Drum Works, which includes steel pans, vibraphone and marimba. It had been a long time since I had seen Steve Reich (perhaps the BAM Festival in 2003), but I emailed Steve anyway, explaining and exploring this idea of mine and he was surprisingly quick to reply. However, his initial reaction was reluctance towards my arrangement ideas. Reich's counterpoint series was written on the concept of blending identical instruments together and the idea of mixing steel pans, vibraphone and marimba seemed to be extremely problematic. After some discussion with him, I went back to the drawing board and thought through how I could arrange the piece to meet my imagination, without distorting his original work. For a few days I reviewed the original score over and over again, and thought deeply about the composition. The solution was not to mix the different instruments in each movement, but to arrange it so that as each instrument enters at the end of the movement, they sound like waves in the background.

Movement I: Fast consists of eight parts with steel pans (a tenor pan and a pair of guitar pans) as the main instrument and the wave sound in the background is created by the vibraphone. (I call the beautiful transitional chords which appear at the beginning and the end of each movement the wave sound.) *Movement II: Slow* consists of nine parts. The vibraphone takes over as the main instrument and the wave sound is played by the marimba. *Movement III: Fast* consists of four parts; the marimba provides the bass, and the cutting sound which develops in the middle of this movement is played by the vibraphone. The piece finishes with the culmination of all of these instruments playing together.

Steve's initial reply included a message saying, '*First send me a recording of it*'. So I stayed up almost three days and nights, overdubbing the numerous parts and sent the demo to Steve. Again, he replied promptly, saying, '*Very good! Your version of Electric Counterpoint works very well*', and stating that he thought the arrangement was interesting. After formally receiving Steve's approval and the

paperwork from Boosey & Hawkes, I jumped into the Blackbird Studio in Nashville, Tennessee where the legendary recording engineer George Massenburg has his own studio. George is the genius who invented the Parametric EQ as a teenager and is well known as the producer/engineer of many big hits in the 80s including Billy Joel, Linda Ronstadt, Phil Collins and Earth, Wind & Fire. George showed a great interest in this project and wanted to *'make it as great as possible'*. As it turned out, George is a very good friend of Bob Ludwig who created many of Steve's original recordings, which gave him an additional insight into the project. We spent two full days recording all the parts. After the recording process, I sent the rough mix to Steve, to which he replied, *'Bravo! You made a beautiful arrangement'*. Those challenging two days really paid off with his short compliment. I asked Akira Fukada, an AES Fellow who is a highly respected recording engineer with numerous awards, and who is also a good friend of George to do the stereo mix. Prior to mixing, Fukada-san and I spent a great deal of time discussing the direction I wanted to take with my recording and reviewing the score. The completed stereo mix is beautiful.

six marimbas counterpoint

The original is actually named Six Marimbas (1986) and as the name indicates this is for an ensemble consisting of six players with six marimbas. My arrangement of Six Marimbas, Six Marimbas Counterpoint, was named by Steve himself in 2010. I have played his great piece on various occasions and I have always felt that it is a difficult piece to perform live and to clearly express the intended rhythms in detail due to the characteristics of the marimba's sound and also the physical distance of six players on stage. Originally, I was considering a project with film footage, until I suddenly had the idea of one player playing all the parts on one instrument. When I shared this idea with Steve, he immediately agreed it was a practical idea and approved a recording of it. I originally planned to play all six parts by myself, but on his suggestion, I arranged a new solo part which could be used to perform live, thusly creating a score for live solo marimba with pre-recorded tape of five marimbas. With this new arrangement, solo marimba players all over the world can perform this piece as a part of their solo repertoire.

I flew to Japan and asked Seigen Ono at Saidera Paradiso to record my arrangement. Seigen Ono is not only an excellent engineer, but he is also an artist whose talent spreads into all aspects of his work: recording, audio engineering, live performance and composition. He is perhaps Japan's leading proponent of 1-bit DSD audio. Recently, Ono has been creating music for Comme Des Garçons, collaborating with John Zone in New York and other well known artists around the world. The recording went very smoothly with the help of Ono's excellent intuitive sense and after two days we had two different versions of the solo. It was a physically daunting recording process as I had to play this approximately sixteen minute piece over twelve times! After some editing and a rough mix, I sent the demo to Steve. Unfortunately, his prompt response wasn't what I had been hoping for; I had added in some reverb to the recording and as a result, the piece had too many overtones and had become too cloudy to hear the detail of the composition. So I went back to my original test recording and started mixing it again from scratch. The piece required strong attacks but I did not want to lose the natural resonance of the marimba. As I went back to the origins of this piece I realised it was originally written for six pianos and remembered a firm comment from Steve saying, *'Be bold!'* These two facts were an eye opener; the choice of mallets which I should have used became very clear as well as the direction of the sound. The mixing of six marimbas continued, and the sound image I tried to create was of the rhythmic patterns of all six pianos intertwining; this sound is very prominent in this recording. I spent several days completing the demo and sent it to Steve as usual, and he responded with the pleasant compliment of, *'Bravo! This is a wonderful sound and it's ready to go.'*

vermont counterpoint version for vibraphone

The original Vermont Counterpoint (1982) is one of Steve's masterpieces for flute, piccolo and alto flute and it is possibly the most widely performed piece after his New York Counterpoint. There are many arrangements of this composition for various instruments, and I remembered a conversation with Steve a long time ago, where he mentioned this piece could be arranged for marimba. Originally, I wanted to arrange Vermont Counterpoint first and then Electric Counterpoint, however I had difficulty imagining how I could play it on marimba and I did not think I could



clearly express the distinctive characteristics of this piece. The original piece has a very precise tonal concept based on a combination of long tones, rhythm and sound which comes from tonguing and native flute techniques; these techniques are extremely important to the beautiful construction of the piece and they add colourful timbres to it. I tried to find a way to replicate these qualities on the marimba using various marimba techniques, including the dead stroke technique, however the tempo of the piece is quite fast and it can easily lose its uplifting feeling when played slowly.

Then the idea of combining the pedal and mute on the vibraphone came to me. The vibraphone supports a wider range of expression and when I attempted a few phrases I thought, *'This is it!'* However, when reading through the score, I realised that the standard vibraphone, which is under three octaves, cannot cover the entire range of the composition. I considered transposing the piece but gave that idea up quickly, as I believed the original scoring was best. Previously, I had the opportunity to play Saito's 4.3 octave vibraphone, and this vibe has a unique, yet beautiful, dark tone. From this experience, I envisioned two options for performing this piece on vibraphone: one option was to add an extra note (a high D) to this vibe and play through the entire piece with one instrument and another option was to use a standard vibraphone but substitute an orchestra bell (glockenspiel) for the piccolo part in order to make it more practical for live performance and also for more players to be able to perform it. The piece starts with the beautiful tone of the vibraphone – with its bright high tones overlapping. Then the piece goes through a softer section before finally coming to the last part where hard rubber mallets twinkle and the tone is like a glockenspiel, gradually covering the whole vibraphone and coming to a grand climax. This piece was written similarly to the end of *Drumming Part I*.

Kazuya Nagae is the engineer who recorded this piece. In addition to his professional credentials and great musical sense, he is also a faculty member at Nagoya University of Arts in Aichi, Japan, close to my home town. The university has state of the art recording equipment, which is why I recorded this piece at the

university. Nagae and I had a great conversation about my recording ideas; he clearly understood and agreed with my concept. He was very enthusiastic about the project and spent an enormous amount of time and energy studying the original music and experimenting with various recording approaches prior to the recording session. The recording went very well and the demo was fantastic. Steve's initial impression was that, *'The vibes by themselves are absolutely sensational'*. However, we weren't there yet and there were many challenges in one particular section. One final piece of advice given by Steve was to, *'Please remember that this piece was written for flutes – not vibraphones. Alto flutes are much quieter than regular flutes and piccolos are the loudest of all.'* Even though I was familiar with the original, I did not see the very basic fact that when playing the alto flute part, I should play less and when playing the regular flute, I should play as marked, and lastly, when playing the piccolo part, I should play the loudest. After this last consideration, the beautiful vibraphone version of Vermont Counterpoint was completed. I cannot thank Mr. Reich and Mr. Nagae enough for their patience on this recording.

I ran into Steve for the first time in over ten years in Toronto, Canada in April 2010 while attending a concert at Koerner Hall. I spoke with him after the concert and he said to me, *'Thank you very much for all of your hard work'*. And as always, he was wearing his trademark jeans and cap; this was the same smiling Steve Reich I had met so many years ago.

I would like to express my gratitude to Steve Reich who has always demonstrated an enduring rigor towards music and provided fantastic advice and praise for me alongside his great passion for music. I started this project in January 2009 and it took almost two and a half years to complete, but now this music is able to be experienced by you, the listener. This gives me more pleasure than anything else. I hope you and many other people around the world enjoy this music. I am very happy with this recording and I am grateful to be able to call Akira Fukada, Seigen Ono, George Massenburg and Kazuya Nagae my close friends. These experiences have become my irreplaceable treasures.

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electric counterpoint for electric guitar and tape (1987)

Electric Counterpoint (1987) was commissioned by the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave Festival for guitarist Pat Metheny. It was composed during the summer of 1987. The duration is about fifteen minutes. It is the third in a series of pieces (first Vermont Counterpoint in 1982 for flutist Ransom Wilson followed by New York Counterpoint in 1985 for clarinetist Richard Stolzman) all dealing with a soloist playing against a pre-recorded tape of themselves. In Electric Counterpoint the soloist pre-records as many as ten guitars and two electric bass parts and then plays the final eleventh guitar part live against the tape. I would like to thank Pat Metheny for showing me how to improve the piece in terms of making it more idiomatic for the guitar.

Electric Counterpoint is in three movements; fast, slow, fast, played one after the other without pause. The first movement, after an introductory pulsing section where the harmonies of the movement are stated, uses a theme derived from Central African horn music that I became aware of through the ethnomusicologist Simha Arom. That theme is built up in eight voice canon and while the remaining two guitars and bass play pulsing harmonies the soloist plays melodic patterns that result from the contrapuntal interlocking of those eight pre-recorded guitars.

The second movement cuts the tempo in half, changes key and introduces a new theme, which is then slowly built up to nine guitars in canon. Once again two other guitars and bass supply harmony while the soloist brings out melodic patterns that result from the overall contrapuntal web.

The third movement returns to the original tempo and key and introduces a new pattern in triple meter. After building up a four guitar canon two bass guitars enter suddenly to further stress the triple meter. The soloist then introduces a new series of strummed chords that are then built up in three guitar canon. When these are complete the soloist returns to melodic patterns that result from the overall counterpoint when suddenly the basses begin to change both key and meter back and forth between E minor and C minor and between 3/2 and 12/8 so that one



hears first three groups of four eighth notes and then four groups of three eighth notes. These rhythmic and tonal changes speed up more and more rapidly until at the end the basses slowly fade out and the ambiguities are finally resolved in 12/8 and E minor.

six marimbas op. tr (1986)

transcription of six pianos (1973) for 6 marimbas

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 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 off by changes of mode and 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.

vermont counterpoint (1982)

for flute and tape. ensemble version for 8 flutes.

Vermont Counterpoint (1982) was commissioned by flutist Ransom Wilson and is dedicated to Betty Freeman. It is scored for three alto flutes, three flutes, three piccolos and one solo part all pre-recorded on tape, plus a live solo part. The live soloist plays alto flute, flute and piccolo and participates in the ongoing counterpoint as well as more extended melodies. The piece could be performed by eleven flutists but is intend primarily as a solo with tape. The duration is approximately ten minutes. In that comparatively short time four sections in four different keys, with the third in a slower tempo, are presented. The compositional techniques used are primarily building up canons between short repeating melodic patterns by substituting notes for rests and then playing melodies that result from their combination. These resulting melodies or melodic patterns then become the basis for the following section as the other surrounding parts in the contrapuntal web fade out. Though the techniques used include several that I discovered as early as 1967 the relatively fast rate of change (there are rarely more than three repeats of any bar), metric modulation into and out of a slower tempo, and relatively rapid changes of key may well create a more concentrated and concise impression.

Steve Reich



KUNIKO

KUNIKO is a soloist who is recognised around the world as one of the most gifted and significant percussionists of her generation in today's contemporary and classical music scene. Her virtuosic technical style, exquisite musical insight and expressive, yet elegant performance style continues to attract not only audiences, but established maestros and composers too. She is renowned for her flawless technique when playing both keyboard and percussion instruments, which blends seamlessly with her profound musical intelligence. KUNIKO's native Japanese DNA gives colourful language and dimension to her superb interpretations.

KUNIKO studied under the world marimba legend, Keiko Abe, at Toho Gakuen School of Music in Tokyo, Japan and advanced her studies under Robert Van Sice at Rotterdam Conservatorium in the Netherlands. KUNIKO graduated with the highest honour (summa cum laude) as the first percussionist in the institution's history. Whilst studying, KUNIKO continued to develop her professional career, playing various concertos and solo recitals, including the Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra written by Akira Miyoshi.

After graduation, she explored Europe for over ten years, further developing her music and artistic career. During this time, she won awards in various competitions and foundations, including the Kranichsteiner Musikpreis from the Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt in 1996, second prize at the International Leigh Howard Stevens Marimba competition in 1996 and a Cultural Award from her town Toyohashi, Japan in 2002, amongst other awards. In 1997, KUNIKO recorded James Wood's Marimba Concerto in London where her performance was highly complimented by the BBC. In addition, KUNIKO was a guest soloist at the James Wood Portrait concert at the 2001 Huddersfield Festival and this performance has received airplay on BBC radio. In 1999, KUNIKO released her first solo album *To The Earth*.

Career highlights for KUNIKO include the Japanese premiere of the music theatre production of *The Pure Land (Jodo)* in 2005 by James Wood; a story based on Yukio Mishima's novel *The Priest of Shiga Temple and His Love*. In May 2006,

KUNIKO revived the legendary percussion concerto *Cassiopeia* by Toru Takemitsu as a part of the Takemitsu Memorial Concert at Tokyo Opera City in Japan. The performance was recorded live and is available on a limited edition CD. Continually performing around the world, during the 2008-09 season alone, KUNIKO showcased a solo recital at Sao Paulo University as part of the first International Percussion Festival, appeared at the historic Monday Evening Concert series in Los Angeles, performed a solo recital at Vancouver New Music Society and a double concerto by Unsuk Chin at the Suntory Summer Festival in addition to many other dates.

More recently KUNIKO has been involved in the production of a new live performance titled *Sound Space Experiment – Steel Drum Works* in Tokyo, Japan in March 2009. At this performance she gave the world-premiere of *Electric Counterpoint*, transcribed for steel pans, marimba and vibraphone by Steve Reich. In 2010 she was invited to perform concerts and master classes in many countries over the globe including Canada, Australia, Portugal, Congo and South Africa. Additionally, KUNIKO has been involved in the revival concerts of *Steel Drum Works* in Vancouver, Canada, Saitama and Itami, Japan. In 2011, KUNIKO's *Steel Drum Works* will be presented as a grand concert at the international music festival Les Flâneries Musicales de Reims in France.

Today KUNIKO continues to perform and collaborate in many recitals and recording sessions with various world-renowned composers, conductors and orchestras including Franco Donatoni, James Wood, Toru Takemitsu, Iannis Xenakis, Seiji Ozawa, Steve Reich and Unsuk Chin. Along with her solo performances in Asia, Europe and the United States, she has been a member of various orchestras and chamber groups such as the Saito Kinen Orchestra (Japan), Ensemble ICTUS (Belgium) and Ensemble NOMAD (Tokyo, Japan). An extremely versatile musician, KUNIKO has been actively involved in various creative art scenes and has partnered with prominent artists from different genres of performing arts, including Megumi Nakamura, a dancer with the Netherlands Dance Theatre, Satoshi Miyagi, a theatre director and Za Ondecoza, a Japanese taiko drumming troupe, amongst other collaborations. KUNIKO also produces commercial music, including theme music for the television programme NHK Art Theatre.

KUNIKO is strongly committed to music education through various forms of percussion workshops, master classes and open rehearsals whenever possible in conjunction with her solo recitals. Since 2004, she has been conducting a series of log drum (slit drum) workshops for children with developmental disabilities in Japan and she plans to continue to devote her skills and talents toward music education and cultural contribution.

KUNIKO has been performing as one of a few worldwide endorsers of Adams Musical Instruments and Pearl Musical Instruments. She currently resides in U.S.A.



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