__An introduction to the works of Steve Reich__

Those who first encounter the music of Steve Reich through his early _It's Gonna Rain_ (1965), _Piano Phase_ (1967) or _Drumming_ (1970-71) will probably connect this vividly contrapuntal music, incessantly relocating simple patterns before our ears and brains, with the term minimalism. It's not an unreasonable link to make. Yet "minimalism" scarcely does justice to this composer's output of the last three decades and more. Like his individual compositions themselves, Reich's musical language in fact evolves constantly. A new idea is mined for its potential, and might seem to allow listeners to predict where its creator would be headed next. But then, suddenly, another fresh idea, or even a return to a neglected old one, changes your listening perspective, even when patterns and regular pulse are audibly retained. Reich's compositions challenge how you listen. They even challenge you how to think. Such evolution began as early as 1967, when Reich concluded that the technique of phasing a short pattern against itself in slowly unraveling counterpoint was more interestingly elaborated with live instruments than in the medium of tape that had brought such phasing into being. Evolution can be traced with remarkable consistency through Reich's output from then onwards: in the increasing harmonic sophistication and textural allure of _Music for Eighteen Musicians_ (1974-6); in the conspicuous melodic impulse of the piece now called _Eight Lines_ (originally _Octet_), of 1979; in the return to text setting - whether in Hebrew, as in _Tehillim_ (1980-81), or English, as in _The Desert Music_ (1982-4). Reich's music has never stopped growing since that time, either. The seminal _Different Trains_ (1988) tracks back to some of the techniques of those early speech-based tapes to achieve the seismic shift forward in the composer's development that leads to the music-theatre works, _The Cave_ (1989-93) and _Three Tales_ (1996-2002), both done in collaboration with video artist Beryl Korot. All three compositions feature the sampling of both speech and other sounds in a live instrumental - and in the latter two cases also theatrical - context, in which "found" speech melodies and rhythms are embedded in harmonic structures of increasing sophistication. In addition, these works dig deep for urgent new meanings via contemplations of, respectively, the Holocaust, the 20th century's Abrahamic inheritance, and the significance of modern technologies. So does _Daniel Variations_ (2006), which sets words by and relating to the American reporter Daniel Pearl, kidnapped and murdered in Pakistan in 2002. Its tolling metallophones and four pianos take their departure point from yet further harmonic and timbral advances charted by Reich in the 21st century and raise them to new heights of lyrical intensity and rich darkness. _Double Sextet_ (2007), meanwhile, develops fresh perspectives to Reich's