

# pressquotes

## COLIN CURRIE, PERCUSSIONIST

### **Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse & John Storgårds / Christopher Rouse: Die Gerettete Alberich**

"The American composer Christopher Rouse's fantasy for percussion and orchestra, 'Der gerettete Alberich', provided the opportunity of discovering Colin Currie, a tremendous virtuoso. Installed in front of the orchestra amongst an impressive ensemble of percussion instruments, he roused the enthusiasm of the audience by his fantastic mastery of tone and rhythm."

*La Dépêche du Midi, May 2009*

"Having snuck in on the quiet, Colin Currie spent the rest of the piece playing for his life, as he embodied the frantic flight, the suffering and the arrogance of that most ill-loved character of the Tetralogy: Alberich the cursed... The soloist had to move from one group of instruments to another, so great was the number involved. The variety of effects was of a rare subtlety. With the instruments spread across the whole width of the Halle aux Grains, it was easy to see the extent of the range of equipment, and to anticipate the flavour of each group. I will particularly remember two moments of that rarest quality, which makes you hear music in a different manner. Firstly, an incredible cadence uniting the percussionists of the orchestra with Colin Currie when, despite the distance between the front and the back of the stage, they all seemed to share in the same trance. And most of all, a moment that confirmed there are not many different types of music, but only one: the right kind. Imagine the effect: after all the pain, the mystery, the hatred, the tragic and grotesque, corresponding to the tribulations of Alberich the cursed; Colin Currie finally sat down in front of the drum kit, and we all wondered how he could have played so many instruments of such diversity, without being completely exhausted. And for a few bars, which will remain the most beautiful ever heard this season - a season already rich in innovation - he launched into a Rock solo which was soon accompanied with passion and exquisite precision by the entire orchestra. These few dazzling bars of 'Wagnerian Rock' proved that Alberich is more contemporary than cursed, and most of all, that Rock is magnificent! And by the by, that this orchestra can really play anything at all, without prejudice. The ovation from the audience was on a level with the power of this music, interpreted to perfection."

*Res Musica, May 2009*

"Peppered with quotes from 'The Ring Cycle', sometimes exact, and at others slightly tweaked, the piece unravelled a dialogue between the sumptuous orchestra and the supremely virtuoso percussionist, running from the jazz-style drum-kit to the kettle-drums; from the cymbals to the wood-block, from the bass drums to the xylophone. After the final flourish from the percussion, an agonising silence gradually concluded this most unusual story. Colin Currie's well-deserved triumph obliged him to reprise a few bars of his solo section as an encore. Just for the fun of it!"

*Classic Toulouse, May 2009*

### **Los Angeles Philharmonic & Leonard Slatkin / Christopher Rouse: Die Gerettete Alberich**

The orchestra plays around with themes from the "Ring," while Alberich simply plays around. The character is delusional as ever. He thinks he's a pop star, so Currie, at one point, hopped on a set of traps. A wide array of instruments presents the wily little guy in an assortment of disguises. His visions of grandeur, while amusing, are not without their edge. Currie's magnificent performance of the delirious cadenza was both thrilling and a bit nerve-racking.

*Los Angeles Times, August 2008*

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## **Colin Currie & Nicolas Hodges / Stockhausen: Kontakte / BBC Proms 2008**

"...it was the intricacy of Kontakte that pianist Nicolas Hodges, percussionist Colin Currie and sound projectionist Bryan Wolf revealed in their finely realised account."

Independent on Sunday, 10 August 2008

"More striking was the 1960 work Kontakte, in which two virtuosos – the pianist Nicolas Hodges and the percussionist Colin Currie – provided a heroic live counterpoint to a cataclysmic recording.

The spectacle of both players striding purposefully across the platform to thwack two huge gongs in perfect synchronicity with the electronic blitz has to be one of this Proms season's great moments."

The Times, 4 August 2008

"Another pioneering work, Kontakte, from 1961, in which electronic sounds are set against piano and percussion, was superbly delivered by Nicolas Hodges and Colin Currie..."

The Guardian, 4 August 2008

"Kontakte, by contrast, had scintillating energy as pianist Nicolas Hodges and percussionist Colin Currie did battle with celestial electronics."

*Evening Standard*, 4 August 2008

## **Minnesota Orchestra & Osmo Vänskä / Jennifer Higdon: Percussion Concerto**

"A percussion concerto by Jennifer Higdon that has been bringing down houses since Currie premiered it three years ago in Philadelphia. He did the same Thursday - a whip-dance showpiece requiring Currie to march back and forth across the stage to handle a bewildering assortment of instruments in ways that range from trap-set hammering to marimba-warbling serenity. Higdon's 25-minute concerto is also a fairly constant interaction between Currie, the irrepressible soloist, and the orchestra's hard-working, five-member percussion battery. The performance solicits a roar."

*Pioneer Press*, May 2008

## **City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra & Martyn Brabbins / Simon Holt *a table of noises***

"A Table of Noises, given its outstanding premiere by Colin Currie with Martyn Brabbins conducting the City of Birmingham Symphony..."

There are six movements, all vividly characterised... It is a concerto full of vivid, prickly textures.

...What one takes away from the work is a delicacy, in the sense of the sounds all being drawn from that fund of memories; it ends quietly, nostalgically, the final tempo marked 'as slow as trees'."

*The Guardian*, May 2008

"... brittle, unsettling and full of bite... Currie's virtuosic performance confirmed that the percussion repertory has been enriched."

*The Sunday Telegraph*, May 2008

"Holt wanted to avoid the reckless flamboyance of many a percussion concerto... The restraint pays off. One can follow the solo line, unpitched though it mostly is, more clearly than often in such pieces."

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In other ways, the music is unbridled, favouring the sonic extremes of piccolo and contrabassoon, and dispensing with the normative presence of violins and violas.

Holt has produced one of his most likeable and subtly coloured scores.”

*The Sunday Times*, May 2008

"I loved the work's surprises and originality, the playful use of Holt's gifts for colour and concise gestures. Throughout, the CBSO matched Currie's dexterity."

*The Times*, May 2008

"The solo part is virtuosic, but never flashily so... and eventually moving to a cadenza where, though the rhythms are notated, the choice of instruments is left to the soloist.

Its premiere from Currie was fluent and assured, the complexities memorised and encompassed with impressive confidence."

*Birmingham Post*, May 2008

"*Der gerettete Alberich* is a work which uses a wide range of percussion instruments of all kinds, spread across the front of the stage, which Colin Currie strikes in alternation as he moves from one side of the stage to the other. Quotes from certain leitmotifs of the Ring can be heard, and the piece moves from passages of sliding dissonant chords to moments of rock-music fury in which the percussionist improvises on the drum-kit. Currie is clearly at ease on stage, and works in close complicity with Kwamé Ryan."

*Classiqueinfo.com*, 29 February 2008

"...Colin Currie, the solo percussionist, ably demonstrated the concerto's worth, rushing from instrument to instrument, dodging Alsop's endlessly gyrating body and a forest of microphone stands. He played with great virtuosity and great colour, opening the concerto with hushed, humming marimba drones and relishing the contrast between the work's virtuosic outer sections and dappled, elusive centre. His antiphonies with the orchestral percussion were arresting in their violence, the machine gun dialogue reminiscent of the combating timpanis of Nielsen's *Inextinguishable* symphony or, indeed, of the sparring soprano queens of Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda*. Throughout, Currie made not one wrong move, even in the fiendishly difficult cadenza, and Alsop provided characterful, ebullient orchestral accompaniment."

*Musicomh.com*, December 2007

"*Veni, Veni, Emmanuel* is one of the most successful pieces of contemporary music. With its insistent and memorable rhythmic drive, visual flair (the soloist alternating between three percussion 'stations,' including the tubular bells at the back) and with its final coup de théâtre, when the orchestra-players take up bells to offer a glistening backdrop to the ever-faster pealing of the soloist, *Veni, veni, Emmanuel* has lost none of its power to delight and amaze. Colin Currie negotiated both platform and music faultlessly. On his rare bars off, he stood to the side to watch the orchestra, before dashing back to the multiple instruments he has to co-ordinate, sometimes at the same time, though mostly in complicated syncopation. There is no better example of how a piece of contemporary music can immediately engage an audience and it is the final ringing chord dying away to silence that will stick in my memory."

*ClassicalSource.com*, August 2007

"MacMillan's dramatic tour de force for percussion soloist and orchestra *Veni, Veni, Emmanuel* has become a best-seller in the concert hall, and there simply isn't a better exponent than the charismatic Colin Currie."

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*BBC Music Magazine*, August 2007

"[*Veni, Veni, Emmanuel*] keeps the soloist busy, especially near the beginning when he visits all the percussion groups in short order and in a demanding vibraphone solo near the end. There was something more than mere virtuosity in Currie's performance — a calm centeredness that seemed fully attuned to the composer's religious aspirations."

*San Antonio Express News*, 12 May 2007

"Hardenberger's style, generating tremendous emotions out of stillness, is the perfect dramatic foil for Currie's overt dynamism. ... The percussion layout resembled an altar, turning Currie into the celebrant of some arcane ritual; he goaded Hardenberger into a series of stylised responses, by turns ululating and ecstatic. ... Enthralling stuff, every second of it"

*The Guardian*, 17 February 2007

"James MacMillan's percussion feast *Veni, Veni Emmanuel*, with the vigorously wonderful Colin Currie ... where Currie and Alsop were in perfect synch, riding the score's tumultuous journey from strife through joy to the ting-a-ling Easter coda. Exciting music, excitingly performed."

*The Times*, 14 February 2007

"Currie was a confident and exciting protagonist, strolling the stage between stations and summoning a universe of sonic color. In Alberich's more extroverted moments, Currie let loose with powerful flourishes, ultimately performing a spectacular barrage in a drumming cadenza that literally lifted him off his feet."

*The Enquirer*, 4 December 2006

"Völliger Themenwechsel: "Trilogy", ein cooles Schlagwerk-Stück des Briten Dave Maric, von dem kühnen Percussionisten Colin Currie virtuos auf Marimba, Celesta und Art-Verwandten geschlagen."  
"Complete change of theme: "Trilogy", a cool percussion piece by British composer Dave Maric, was given a virtuoso performance by the bold percussionist Colin Currie on marimba, celesta and related instruments."

*Wiener Zeitung*, 7 October 2006

"Another young British firework, the percussionist Colin Currie, drilled the wood blocks in Louis Andriessen's *Woodpecker* – a ferocious and exciting performance."

*The Times*, June 2006

"Currie is a consummate musician and an exciting performer to watch – he was certainly put through his paces by Mackey. Although the work centres primarily on the marimba, an exotic array of other instruments was also at hand to ensure the soloist was running the musical equivalent of a marathon. Throughout, there were bursts of jazz, pop riffs and rustic folk bits."

*The Scotsman*, November 2005

"Colin Currie ran lithely about the stage, summoning whispered arpeggiations from the marimba, icy chimes from the xylophone and a wild "battle-of-the-bands" drum solo toward the finale."

*Washington Post*, November 2005

"The performance elicited a cheering ovation for the extraordinary percussion soloist, Colin Currie, and for the composer..."

*New York Times*, December 2005

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“...the music is nonstop in its energy. There are frenzied outbursts and flourishes for the soloist on the marimba, vibraphone, blocks and drum sets....it certainly provided a vehicle for the brilliant Mr. Currie, a limber, young virtuoso born in Edinburgh. He played the performance in an open-collared shirt and rubber-soled shoes - not just an outfit of choice but a practical necessity, since he had to dash across the stage repeatedly from the marimba to the drum set back to the vibraphone, and so on. The jazzy and vehement cadenza, played on the drum set, gave Mr. Currie his Max Roach moment.”

*New York Times*, December 2005

“...the piece requires the soloist – Colin Currie – to be spread among several clusters of instruments (marimba, vibraphone, temple blocks and even bongos) out front in music full of extensive duets...”

*Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 2005

“The slow movement had wave after wave of ecstatic, intense color, with sound shapes created by bowing cymbals. Broad Coplandesque melodies commanded the ear, though everything around them went in unexpected directions.”

*Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 2005

“Higdon is now said to be the second-most-performed of living American orchestral composers, trailing only John Adams -- and the standing ovation her concerto received was both full-hearted and seemingly all but unanimous.”

*Washington Post*, November 2005

“The performance at the Classix festival by these friendly and world class musicians was both strong and dynamic and – contrary to all prejudice against new music – entertaining.”

“ In the cheerful percussion piece Woodpecker the young British percussionist showed all of his virtuosity on different instruments. And André Jolivet’s rhythmically dense, almost jazzy pieces, made some students move in their chairs.”

*The Star-Telegram*, April 2005

“...Currie moved lithely, athletically and expressively through the menagerie of percussion instruments...”

*The Star-Telegram*, April 2005

“Percussionist Colin Currie’s performance is partly gymnastic, partly ritual, always virtuosic and wholly extraordinary in its sense of musical exaltation.”

*The Buffalo News*, February 2005

“Veni, Veni, Emmanuel closed the weekend, with a showstopping performance from the percussion virtuoso Colin Currie. I’d never thought that drums could be so lyrical, and the sight and sound of the orchestral players gently ringing in the Easter dawn on their little bells still packs a punch.”

*The Daily Telegraph*, January 2005

“I could not but acknowledge the showmanship of the percussion concerto, Veni, Veni, Emmanuel given by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, with the composer and a staggeringly dextrous soloist in Colin Currie.”

*The Sunday Times*, January 2005

“Colin Currie’s account of the solo part was a tour de force...”

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*The Evening Standard*, January 2005

"This is MacMillan's early and exuberant percussion concerto, and it is easy to hear why it has become so popular. It evokes the ever-topical mix of religion and violence in slap-and-tinkle writing, which was dispatched here with panache by the soloist Colin Currie. He plays with far more nuance than many percussionists, and certainly finds more in the piece than the ubiquitous Evelyn Glennie, for whom it is written."

*The Times*, January 2005

"[the score that] fully gripped the imagination was the familiar, glamorous *Veni, Veni, Emmanuel*, with MacMillan conducting the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Colin Currie the charismatic, athletic percussionist."

*The Guardian*, January 2005

"Currie moved confidently between each instrument, especially mellifluous on the tuned percussion, into which creeps a Hollywood-style filmic element. And though vividly dramatic, he avoided being raucous, as the work's climax erupts before the epilogue brings together the conflicting elements of wood, metal and skin in this subtle showpiece."

*The Independent*, January 2005

"...Currie led by example, arresting us with his effortless virtuosity and engaging personality."

*The Scotsman*, January 2005

"A starry young team, then, and what an evening they produced...starring the virtuoso Currie as principal soloist, the work develops a fascinating theatrical interplay between the solo player and his orchestral colleagues... He moves among his instruments with a lithe athleticism, playing with an enthralling flair and concentration which is quite gripping to observe.

Within each section of the work the main musical element is introduced by the principal soloist, before changing in structure, mood and colour as the entire orchestra is introduced. With mesmerising rhythmic patterns pulsating from side to side, sound flowing from left to right and back to front, Walker skilfully drove the work on at pace, to finish with a rather beautiful and peaceful ending, as all of the tonal colours of the title were brought together in final dissolution."

*Sunday Herald*, January 2005

Colin Currie, in his BSO debut, was the striking - so to speak - soloist, moving seamlessly from battery to battery and producing both subtle and explosive effects not just with aplomb, but expressive effect.

*The Baltimore Sun*, October 2004

"It's shortly after 10pm and the highlight of the evening stands before us. Currie was almost flying as he played Per Nørgård's "Fire over Water", and changed with enormous precision between marimba and drums, from soft, flowing sound pictures to hammering martial rhythms. Just watching the performance caused one to break into a sweat and there was great applause for a man who has made percussion into a solo instrument as if it was completely natural."

*Berner Zeitung*, May 2004

"the marimba and guitar quintet smoked. The multiple layers of harmony set off the melody and emphasised the group's ultimate synchronicity... The music was exciting and delightful. The vibe/guitar combo sounded in turns dreamy and mischievous"

*Journal World*, February 2004

"...his [Currie's] amazing array of percussive colours astounded; he further showed us how to use percussion as an instrument. With the vibraphone and marimba, accompanied by spectral sounds in the studio, Colin used the bow to create even more fantastic sounds to assault the ears and perk one

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right up...!”

*The Beverly Hills Outlook*, March 2004

“...[Currie] applies playing of such extraordinary detail and such unforced clarity that the concerto glows with the intimacy and transparency of chamber music.”

*The Herald*, December 2003

“Last night a great cheer went up for the charismatic Colin Currie, who is such an inspirational catalyst when it comes to contemporary percussion music. This concerto by Duddell looked much more difficult to play than it was to listen to, but Currie’s athleticism and musicianship were fully equal to it.”

BBC Proms - *The Daily Telegraph*, July 2003

“Collin Currie’s account of the percussion concerto Rapture gets full marks both for sustained energy and good humour –the capricious rhythm of the slow movement, ‘Mallets’, is beautifully delivered.”

*BBC Music Magazine*, February 2003

“In his solo, Currie was nimble and dazzling in executing Maric’s mind-bending rhythms.”

*LA Times*, January 2003

“Currie made it all look so easy - his organisational and spatial skills were outstanding, with many object lessons on techniques and performance for aspiring youngsters in the audience.”

*The Birmingham Post*, October 2002

“Colin Currie is a musician first and a percussionist second...The instruments were played with a wonderful range of touch....A marvellous concert which got the South Bank Centre’s *Rhythm Sticks* festival off to a flying start”

*The Telegraph*, July 2002

“The concert was a triumph, with Currie’s astounding, heart-stopping technical virtuosity, as usual with this impressive young musician, never merely a vehicle for empty display, but always at the service of the music.”

*The Glasgow Herald*, June 2002

“Currie gave a superlative performance of a work he knows so intimately that he plays almost all of it from memory...Currie plays down the theatrics and gymnastics of the piece, and – more than any other soloist – concentrates on the purely musical elements: he is more sensitive than others to dynamics, contrasts of colour, and the big structure of the piece; literally, he gets more music out of it...an enthralled capacity audience gave him a huge an noisy ovation.”

*The Herald*, June 2002

“The beauty in performance comes from Currie’s ability to make his instruments sound as if they are playing for the gods”

*The Telegraph*, 2002

“this world premiere performance was stunningly well-played, both by the irrepressible Currie and the ensemble”

*The Herald*, 2002

“...the dazzlingly brilliant soloist Colin Currie.”

*Financial Times*, 2001

“Michael Torke’s percussion concerto [was] given a stunning world premiere performance by soloist Colin Currie”

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*Glasgow Herald, 2001*

“the total effect of [Dave Maric’s *Trilogy*] was overwhelming, genuine orchestral textures built out of a battery of live and sampled sounds, with Currie playing the lot – as with everything in his breathtaking recital – from memory, and every movement of the piece delivered with awesome technical expertise and musicality. It’s important not to understate Colin Currie’s standing. We know he’s good – one of the best. He’s already a figure of international standing. But this incredible young Scottish musician – just in his mid-twenties – will be a world star.”

*Glasgow Herald, 2000*

“Solo percussion recitals are still a rarity. But Edinburgh’s Colin Currie is among those who can be expected to make them far more common. Quite apart from his musical qualities, he has the gift of introducing pieces and pointing the ear to the real virtues of the music...he played with stunning precision and energy... the entire programme was flawlessly assembled.”

*The Scotsman, 2000*

“...much of its success was due to the solo playing of Colin Currie, whose athletic percussionism blended his almost compulsive showmanship with an increasingly deep musicality.”

*The Guardian, 2000*

“Certainly, of the myriad performances of *Veni, Veni, Emmanuel* that I’ve heard over the years – from its Prom debut in 1992 right up to date – Saturday night’s was just about the finest, most intelligent account I’ve experienced. On top of that, percussion wizard Colin Currie – now one of the complete masters of this piece – produced utter musical magic. Less flamboyant and theatrical than Glennie, Currie instead brings brainpower to the piece, revealing (behind the most extraordinarily tight rhythmic sense) a remarkable musical sensitivity in the solo part. A breathtaking and thought-provoking performance.”

*Glasgow Herald, 2000*

“In Colin Currie’s agile performance of the virtuosic percussion concerto *Veni, Veni, Emmanuel*, now almost a classic of the modern orchestral repertoire, the high speeds and contrasting sonorities avoided sounding garbled or frenzied. With obvious enjoyment of the work’s physical challenges, Currie played his part with zest and, with the composer conducting, in unusually close collaboration with his instrumental partners.”

*The Independent, 2000*

“For sheer energy it would be difficult to beat *Veni, Veni, Emmanuel*. In the role of solo percussionist, the hugely talented Colin Currie provided a visual as well as aural feast, now racing across the stage to grab another pair of sticks with split-second timing, now on his knees in front of two gongs.”

*The Times, 1999*

“The percussionist – balletic, beautiful, thrilling – was Colin Currie.”

*The Guardian, 1999*

“Currie was brilliant....seeming to sprout another pair of arms as he dashed about in front of the stage, even delivering a rock-drum segment midway through.”

*Denver Rocky Mountain News, 1999*