

Verge (1997)

Sebastian Currier

almost too fast
almost too slow
almost too mechanical
almost too dark
almost too light
almost too fractured
almost too much
almost too little
almost too calm

“*Verge* is written for and dedicated to the Verdehr Trio and was commissioned by Michigan State University. The idea for the work is taken from the title of one of the pieces in Robert Schumann's *Kinderszenen*, ‘almost too serious.’ Implicit in the title is an aesthetic boundary which, although it may be approached, should not be crossed. If the piece were too serious, it would cause it to be out of balance with the simple, childlike world of *Kinderszenen* as a whole. On the other hand, as long as it does not cross this threshold, it may come as close as possible. It is this idea of being on the verge of some extremity or another that becomes the basis for my piece. Each of the nine movements stands on the edge of excess and I use the phrase borrowed from Schumann to describe them. The nine movements can be divided into cycles of three, each beginning with a pair of movements that oppose one another: fast-slow; dark-light; etc. ‘Almost too much’ forms the dramatic center of the whole. ‘Almost too fractured’ presents brief quotations from the other movements.”

—Sebastian Currier

The world premiere of *Verge* was on March 7, 1998 at St. Nicholas Church, Talinn, Estonia. The United State premiere was on March 28, 1999 at the Music Room, Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C. with the composer present.

Sebastian Currier (born 1959, Huntingdon, Pennsylvania) was raised in a family of talented musicians and received degrees from the Manhattan School of Music and the Juilliard School. He is the recipient of a Rome Prize, a Berlin Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship, several awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a Friedheim Award, a Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, and a Tanglewood Fellowship. In 2007 he received the prestigious Grawemeyer Prize.

Commissions include ones from the Fromm Foundation, Koussevitzky Foundation, Barlow Endowment, Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, and the American Composers Orchestra. The latter resulted in *Microsymphon*, which was performed at Carnegie Hall with Dennis Russell Davies conducting. It was recorded by the Frankfurt Radio Orchestra.

Aftersong was written for the world-renowned violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter who, with pianist Lambert Orkis, premiered the work at the Schleswig-Holstein Festival and performed it at the Salzburg Festival. They performed both *Aftersong* and another work of Currier's, *Clockwork*, in major cities throughout Europe, Asia, and the United States. In 2011, Mutter premiered *Time Machines* with the New York Philharmonic. Currier has also written works that involve electronic media and video. *Nightmaze*, a multimedia piece based on a text of Thomas Bolt, has been performed by Network for New Music and the Mosaic Ensemble. Currier's music is published by Boosey & Hawkes, and recordings are available through Deutsche Grammophon, New World Records, Albany Records, Crystal Records, and CRI.

Currier held residencies at the MacDowell and Yaddo colonies and the Bowdoin Summer Music Festival. From 1999–2007, he was Professor of Music at Columbia University. In 2013 he was appointed Artist-in-Residence at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey.

Additional information is available at www.sebastiancurrier.com.