

MICHAEL NYMAN
(March 23, 1944 –)

Year	Age	Event
1961-64	17-20	Studies composition with Alan Bush at Royal Academy of Music
1964	20	Abandons composition, "disaffected with the then current orthodoxies of international modernism."
1964-67	20-23	Studies musicology with Thurston Dart (Baroque scholar) at King's College, London; thesis (unfinished) was on 16th- and 17th-century English repetitive and systems music (rounds, canons, & catches)
1965-66	21-22	Collects folk music in Romania
1967	23	Writes music for <i>5 Postcards from Capital Cities</i> , by Peter Greenaway
1968	24	In a <i>Spectator</i> review of Cornelius Cardew's <i>The Great Digest</i> , Nyman supposedly first coins the term "minimalism" with regard to music
1968	24	Writes libretto for Harrison Birtwistle's <i>Down by the Greenwood Side</i>
1972	28	Edits Eulenburg Edition of Handel's Concerti Gross, op. 6 and Galliard Edition of Purcell's Catches (contrapuntal drinking songs)
1974	30	Publishes <i>Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond</i> (a history of music)
1976	32	Birtwistle commissions Nyman to provide arrangements of 18th-century Venetian songs for production of Carlo Goldoni's <i>Il Campiello</i> ; Nyman assembles the "loudest unamplified street band" he could imagine, which becomes the Nyman Band
1977	33	Nyman Band does not want to disband; Nyman writes <i>In Re Don Giovanni</i>
1981	37	First Nyman Band album is released
1993	49	Jane Campion's movie <i>Piano</i> is released with Nyman's score; soundtrack sells 3 million copies

Michael Nyman Band

- originally composed of rebecs (violins), sackbuts (trombones), and shawms (oboes)
- included banjo and saxophone
- later switches to amplified instruments: electric bass, strings, brass, saxes, piano, etc.

Nyman, 1977, on music: "the ear rather than the process is the initial and final arbiter."

From 1997 interview (discussing recent film work):

- "Basically, all I want to do is opera."
- "I never saw an image ever that suggested a musical representation."
- "But what gets me going is not the way something looks. It's the structure."
- calls himself a "post-minimalist," more akin to John Adams than Reich, Riley, or Glass

Nick Kimberley, 2005: "At every turn Nyman has proved eminently practical. Not for him the ivory tower anguish of a tormented composer grappling with abstract systems. Rather he has consistently displayed an openness to collaboration, a spry sense of humour, a literate imagination and an instinctive ability to engage a highly diverse audience."

Some notable works (with various influences and appropriations)

- 1978 - *I-100* (composed in 1976)
[inspired by John Cage]
- 1982 - "Chasing Sheep is best left to shepherds," *The Draughtsman's Contract*
[derived from Purcell]
- 1985 - *String Quartet No. 1*
[derived from Bull's *Walsingham* and Schoenberg's *String Quartet #2*, op. 10]
- 1987 - *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (opera)
[derived from Schumann, especially "Ich Grolle Nicht," *Dichterliebe*, op. 48]
- 1990 - "Corona," *Six Celan Songs* (contralto and orchestra)
[derived from Chopin's Mazurka op. 17, no. 4]
- 1995 - *String Quartet No. 4*
[derived from *Yamamoto Perpetuo* [1993]]

Some stylistic characteristics:

- Rhythm
 - consistent monorhythmic pulse in one instrument, often coupled to another at half speed
 - accents on upbeats (particularly beats 1 and 3), often held across barline
 - changing meters are common, although tactus is typically consistent across changes
 - predilection for cross rhythms (2 against 3), especially 3 within a duple meter
- Harmony/Counterpoint
 - elements of functional harmony
 - prominent bass parts, often written in root position
 - use of second inversion harmonies (among others) as structural chords
 - when using inversions, bass often moves in contrary motion to the roots of chords
 - unchanging harmonic rhythm is common
 - unabashed use of parallel fifths and parallel root-position chords
- Instrumentation
 - often static, changing only at barlines or even just larger sections
 - pervasive use of electric bass
 - directions for instruments to be amplified (e.g., string quartet)
 - many works include saxophone
- Form
 - many works constructed as continuous variations on a harmonic ostinato (chaconne)
 - forward motion often derives from an increasing density of instrumentation, rhythms, figuration, etc.
 - often uses fragments from the works of other composers' as generative musical kernels (much like the "parody" technique of the Renaissance and Baroque)
 - often reworks or expands his own compositions in new instrumentations

SELECTED WORKS (excluding those for Film/TV)

- 1974 - *Bell Set No. 1* (multiple metal percussion)
 1976 - *Waltz in F* (variable)
 *1977 - *In Re Don Giovanni* (ensemble)
 1978 - *The Otherwise Very Beautiful Blue Danube Waltz* (multiple pianos)
 1979 - *'The Masterwork' Award-Winning Fish-Knife* (ensemble)
 1980 - *A Neat Slice of Time* (choir)
 1981 - *Think Slow, Act Fast* (ensemble)
 1981 - *Five Orchestral Pieces for Opus Tree* (band)
 1981 - *2 Violins*
 1982 - *Four Saxes (Real Slow Drag)* (saxophone quartet)
 1983 - *Love is Certainly, at Least Alphabetically Speaking* (soprano and band)
 1983 - *A Handsome, Smooth, Sweet, Smart, Clear Stroke: Or Else Play Not At All* (orchestra)
 1983 - *Time's Up* (chamber ensemble)
 1983 - *I'll Stake My Cremona to a Jew's Trump* (electric violin and viola, both players singing)
 1984 - *The Abbess of Andouilletts* (choir)
 1985 - *Nose-List Song* (soprano and orchestra)
 1985 - *Child's Play* (2 violins; harpsichord)
 *1985 - *String Quartet No. 1*
 1986 - *Taking a Line for a Second Walk* (for orchestra or piano duet)
 1986 - *And Do They Do* (modern dance, 1986)
 1987 - *Vital Statistics* (opera; libretto by Victoria Hardie)
 *1988 - *String Quartet No. 2*
 1989 - *Out of the Ruins* (choir)
 1989 - *La Traversée de Paris* (soprano and band)
 1989 - *The Fall of Icarus* (band)
 1990 - *Shaping the Curve* (soprano saxophone, string quartet or piano)
 *1990 - *Six Celan Songs* (contralto and orchestra)
 1990 - *Polish Love Song* (soprano and piano)
 *1990 - *String Quartet No. 3*
 1991 - *Where the Bee Dances* (soprano saxophone and orchestra)
 1991 - *Fluegelhorn and Piano*
 *1992 - *Time Will Pronounce* (violin, cello, and piano)
 *1992 - *For John Cage* (brass ensemble)
 *1992 - *The Convertibility of Lute Strings* (solo harpsichord)
 1992 - *Anne de Lucy Songs* (soprano and piano)
 1992 - *The Upside-Down Violin* (orchestra/ensemble)
 1993 - *The Piano Concerto* (piano and orchestra)
 *1993 - *Noises, Sounds & Sweet Airs* (1993; opera-ballet setting Shakespeare's *The Tempest*)
 1993 - *Yamamoto Perpetuo* (violin solo)
 1993 - *Songs for Tony* (saxophone quartet)
 1994 - *To Morrow* (soprano or soprano saxophone, organ)
 1994 - *Concerto for Trombone* (trombone, orchestra, and steel filing cabinets)
 *1995 - *String Quartet No. 4*
 1995 - *Tango for Tim (In memoriam Tom Suster)* (harpsichord)
 1995 - *The Waltz Song* (unison voices)

- 1995 - *Grounded* (mezzo-soprano, saxophones, violin, piano)
 1995 - *Concerto for Harpsichord and Strings*
 1995 - *Double Concerto for Saxophone and Cello* (saxophone, cello, and orchestra)
 1996 - *After Extra Time* (ensemble)
 1997 - *Strong on Oaks, Strong on the Causes of Oaks* (orchestra)
 1997 - *The Promise* (piano)
 1998 - *Cycle of Disquietude (Coisas, Vozes, Letras)* (soprano, mezzo-soprano, and band)
 1998 - *Orfeu* (band)
 1998 - *De Granada A La Luna* (band)
 1999 - *The Comissar Vanishes* (band)
 *2000 - *Facing Goya* (opera; libretto by Victoria Hardie)
 2003 - *Violin Concerto* (violin and orchestra)
 2003 - *Man and Boy: Dada* (opera)

SELECTED SOUNDTRACKS for FILM, TELEVISION, and NEW MEDIA

- 1967 - *5 Postcards from Capital Cities*
 1976 - *Goole by Numbers*
 1976 - *Keep It Up Downstairs*
 1977 - *Tom Phillips*
 1978 - *A Walk Through H: The Reincarnation of an Ornithologist*
 1978 - *Vertical Features Remake*
 *1978 - *I-100* composed in 1976 (4-6 pianos)
 1980 - *The Falls*
 1980 - *Act of God*
 1981 - *Terence Conran*
 *1982 - *The Draughtsman's Contract*
 1982 - *Brimstone & Treacle* (collaboration with Sting)
 1983 - *Nelly's Version*
 1983 - *The Coastline*
 1984 - *Making a Splash*
 1984 - *The Cold Room*
 1984 - *Fairly Secret Army*
 *1985 - *A Zed & Two Noughts*
 1985 - *The Kiss*
 1985 - *Inside Rooms: 26 Bathrooms, London & Oxfordshire*
 1986 - *Ballet mécanique* (1921 silent film)
 1986 - *I'll Stake My Cremona to a Jew's Trump*
 1986 - *The Disputation*
 *1987 - *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (opera)
 1988 - *Fear of Drowning*
 1988 - *Death in the Seine*
 1988 - *Drowning by Numbers*
 1989 - *Out of the Ruins*
 1989 - *Hubert Bals Handshake*
 *1989 - *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover*
 1990 - *Men of Steel*

1990 - *Les Enfants volants*
 1990 - *The Hairdresser's Husband*
 1991 - *Ich war ein glücklicher Mensch*
 *1991 - *Prospero's Books*
 *1991 - *Not Mozart: Letters, Riddles and Writs*
 1992 - *The Fall of Icarus*
 1992 - *The Final Score*
 *1993 - *The Piano*
 1994- *Mesmer*
 1995 - *The Diary of Anne Frank*
 *1995 - *Carrington*
 *1996 - *The Ogre*
 1996 - *Enemy Zero*
 1997 - *Anzar*
 *1997 - *Gattaca*
 1998 - *Titch*
 1998 - *Practical Magic* (unused score)
 *1999 - *Ravenous* (collaboration with Damon Albarn)
 1999 - *Wonderland*
 1999 - *Nabbie's Love*
 *1999 - *The End of the Affair*
 2000 - *Act Without Words I*
 2000 - *The Claim*
 2001 - *Subterrain*
 2001 - *24 Hours in the Life of a Woman*
 2003 - *The Actors*
 2003 - *Nathalie...*
 2004 - *Luminal*
 2004 - *The Libertine*
 2005 - *Jestem*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ellis, William. "A Chat with Michael Nyman." *American Record Guide*. Vol. 60, no. 2 (March/April 1997): 32-4.
- Michael Nyman Web Site*, <http://www.michaelnyman.com>.
- Nyman, Michael. *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*. New York: Schirmer, 1974. SIBLEY: ML197. N996 E9 1974.
- . Foreward to G. F. Händel. *Concerto Grosso, Op. 6 No. 12*. London: Ernst Eulenberg, 1973. SIBLEY: M1042 H236 op.6 no.12 1973 min.
- . Foreward to Henry Purcell. *Come Let Us Drink: Catches*. Norfolk: Galliard, 1972. SIBLEY: M1578 P985 C7 1972.
- Siôn, Pwyll Ap. "Michael Nyman." *Grove Music Online*. Edited by L. Macy. <http://www.grovemusic.com>.
- Strickland, Edward. *Minimalism: Origins*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993. SIBLEY: ML197 .S917 M66 1993.

RECORDINGS & SCORES

- Bull, John. *Walsingham*. Published in *Musica Britannica*, vol. 19: *John Bull, Keyboard Music: II*. Transcribed and Edited by Thurston Dart. London: Stainer and Bell, 1963. SIBLEY: M2.3 E58 M98L v.19.
- Chopin. *Mazurken*. Munich: G. Henle, 1978. SIBLEY: M32 .C549 M4 1978.
- Nyman, Michael. "Chasing sheep is best left to shepherds." From *The Draughtman's Contract*. Michael Nyman Band. *The Essential Michael Nyman Band*. Argo 436 820-2. SIBLEY: CD 4136.
- . "The convertability of lute strings." Michael Nyman. *Time Will Pronounce*. Performed by Virginia Black. Argo 440 282-2. SIBLEY: CD 5219.
- . *The convertability of lute strings*. London: Chester Music, 1990. SIBLEY: M25 .N996 C7 1990z.
- . "For John Cage." Michael Nyman. *Time Will Pronounce*. Performed by London Brass. Argo 440 282-2. SIBLEY: CD 5219.
- . *For John Cage*. London: Chester Music, 1998. SIBLEY: M957.4 .N996 F69 1998.
- . *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*. CBS MK 44669. SIBLEY: CD 643.
- . *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat: Vocal Score*. London: Chester Music, 1996. SIBLEY: M1503.N996 M26 1996.
- . "Miranda." From *Prospero's Books*. Michael Nyman Band. *The Essential Michael Nyman Band*. Argo 436 820-2. SIBLEY: CD 4136.
- . "Miserere paraphrase." From *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife & her Lover*. Michael Nyman Band. *The Essential Michael Nyman Band*. Argo 436 820-2. SIBLEY: CD 4136.
- . *Miserere*. London: Chester Music, 1992. SIBLEY: M2079 .L62 N996 1992.
- . "1-100." *Piano Circus*. Performed by Piano Circus. Argo 433 522-2. SIBLEY: CD 2854.
- . "Six Celan Songs." Michael Nyman Band with Ute Lemper. *Songbook*. London 452 227-2. SIBLEY: CD 2999.
- . *Six Celan Songs*. London: Chester Music, 1996. SIBLEY: M1613.3 .N996 C39 1996.
- . "String Quartet 1." *String Quartets 1-3*. Performed by the Balanescu Quartet. Argo 433 093-2. SIBLEY: CD 4137.
- . *String Quartets no. 1*. London: Chester Music, 1993. SIBLEY: M452 .N996 no.1 1993.
- . "String Quartet 2." *String Quartets 1-3*. Performed by the Balanescu Quartet. Argo 433 093-2. SIBLEY: CD 4137.
- . *String Quartets no. 2*. London: Chester Music, 1993. SIBLEY: M452 .N996 no.2 1993.
- . "String Quartet 3." *String Quartets 1-3*. Performed by the Balanescu Quartet. Argo 433 093-2. SIBLEY: CD 4137.
- . *String Quartets no. 3*. London: Chester Music, 1993. SIBLEY: M452 .N996 no.3 1993.
- . "String Quartet 4." *String Quartets 2-4*. Performed by the Lyric Quartet. Black Box Music BBM1020. SIBLEY: CD12,692.
- . *String Quartet no. 4*. London: Chester Music, 1996. SIBLEY: M452 .N996 no.4 1996.
- . "Time will pronounce." Michael Nyman. *Time Will Pronounce*. Performed by Trio of London. Argo 440 282-2. SIBLEY: CD 5219.
- . *Time will pronounce*. London: Chester Music, 1997. SIBLEY: M312 .N996 T58 1997.
- Schoenberg, Arnold. *String Quartets nos. 1 and 2*. Mineola, NY: Dover, 1997. SIBLEY: M452 .S365 op.7 1997.
- Schumann, Robert. *Dichterliebe: nach Gedichten von Heinrich Heine: Opus 48 für Singstimme und Klavier*. Leipzig: Edition Peters, 1986. SIBLEY: M1621.4 .S392 D546 1986.