### MICHAEL NYMAN
(March 23, 1944 – )

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961-64</td>
<td>17-20</td>
<td>Studies composition with Alan Bush at Royal Academy of Music</td>
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<td>1964</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Abandons composition, &quot;disaffected with the then current orthodoxies of international modernism.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>1964-67</td>
<td>20-23</td>
<td>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, &amp; catches)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1965-66</td>
<td>21-22</td>
<td>Collects folk music in Romania</td>
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<td>1967</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Writes music for <em>5 Postcards from Capital Cities</em>, by Peter Greenaway</td>
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<td>1968</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>In a <em>Spectator</em> review of Cornelius Cardew's <em>The Great Digest</em>, Nyman supposedly first coins the term &quot;minimalism&quot; with regard to music</td>
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<td>1968</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Writes libretto for Harrison Birtwistle's <em>Down by the Greenwood Side</em></td>
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<td>1972</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Edits Eulenburg Edition of Handel's Concerti Gross, op. 6 and Galliard Edition of Purcell's Catches (contrapuntal drinking songs)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Publishes <em>Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond</em> (a history of music)</td>
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<td>1976</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Birtwistle commissions Nyman to provide arrangements of 18th-century Venetian songs for production of Carlo Goldoni's <em>Il Campiello</em>; Nyman assembles the &quot;loudest unamplified street band&quot; he could imagine, which becomes the Nyman Band</td>
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<td>1977</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Nyman Band does not want to disband; Nyman writes <em>In Re Don Giovanni</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>First Nyman Band album is released</td>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Jane Campion's movie <em>Piano</em> is released with Nyman's score; soundtrack sells 3 million copies</td>
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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 - **1-100** (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 Andouillets (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 - Flugelhorn 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) (harpischord)
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 - *The Promise* (piano)
1998 - *Cycle of Disquietude (Coisas, Vozes, Lettras)* (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 - *1-100* 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

SIBLEY: M1042 H236 op.6 no.12 1973 min.
SIBLEY: M1578 P985 C7 1972.
RECORDINGS & SCORES


Nyman, Michael 1944-PERSONAL

Full name, Michael Lawrence Nyman; born March 23, 1944, in London, England; son of Mark and Jeannette Nyman; married Aet Toome, May 16, 1970; children: Molly, additional daughter. Two years after Nyman’s book was released, Henry Birtwistle, the director of music at the National Theatre in England, asked Nyman to arrange the music for a production of II Campiello by Italian librettist Carlo Goldoni. Nyman formed a band for the stage production.