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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<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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<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 5 Postcards from Capital Cities, by Peter Greenaway</td>
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<td>1968</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>In a Spectator review of Cornelius Cardew's The Great Digest, 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 Down by the Greenwood Side</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 Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond (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 Il Campiello; 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 In Re Don Giovanni</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 Piano 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 - 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) (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
RECORDINGS & SCORES
—. The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat. CBS MK 44669. SIBLEY: CD 643.