

## Michael Nyman: Viola and Piano

Michael Nyman was born in 1944 and studied in London at King's College and the Royal Academy of Music. Some of his earlier works show a clear influence of Bela Bartok and Paul Hindemith, and Nyman was also taught the methods of serialism at a summer composition course run by the 'Manchester School'. Concurrently Nyman was involved in Baroque musicological research and editing, and he later travelled to Romania for an additional study of folk song. Unsurprisingly the variety of these earlier influences had an enormous impression on his later career as a composer, critic and performer.

Michael Nyman's career as a performing musician includes the well-known Michael Nyman Band, established in the late 1970s when Harrison Birtwistle had commissioned incidental music from Nyman for a production of Goldoni's *'Il Campiello'* at the National Theatre. The group of musicians performing for this production continued to play together as the 'Campiello Band', later renamed the 'Michael Nyman Band.' The group still performs today.



In the late 1960s Michael Nyman was asked to write his first review for *The Spectator* and this began his career as a revered critic, twice interviewing the composer Steve Reich, writing regularly for *The Spectator*, *New Statesman*, *Tempo* and *The Listener* (approx. 1965-1980) and developing his own distinct style of musical critique and analysis. Nyman has (on occasion) been opposed to the concept of a 'status' or any supposed intellectual superiority of modern music, and quoted the musicologist Carl Dahlhaus saying 'most music was modern once.' He is also known for coining the term 'minimalism' in 1968, to define works based on the systematic repetition of limited musical material.

'Viola and Piano' was written in the summer of 1995 and commissioned by the Wigmore Hall for the Hindemith Viola Festival and Kim Kashkashian. It takes approximately ten minutes to perform and was premiered by Kashkashian and Peter Nagy in 1995. The piece is clearly characterised by sections and sub-sections of different harmonic, rhythmic and melodic material. It is well worth listening to the piece a few times as a whole, in order to

grasp the rhythmic complexity and to understand how the various melodic ideas are developed throughout.

**References:**

Michael Nyman: Collected Writings, Edited by Pwyll Ap Siôn, Ashgate Publishing

The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century by Alex Ross (Picador)

[www.michaelnyman.com](http://www.michaelnyman.com)

[www.musicsalesclassical.com/composer/long-bio/Michael-Nyman](http://www.musicsalesclassical.com/composer/long-bio/Michael-Nyman)

***Monica Jensen***

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