

## The Michael Nyman Band

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Twenty five years ago, Michael Nyman published his book *Experimental Music—Cage and Beyond*. This "first hand" introduction to the concepts of time, space, sound and performance as situative relational magnitudes of experimental music—the most radical manifestation of which was John Cage's 4'33"—also documents fundamental musical styles including Nyman's own so-called minimalism which, in an allusion to the visual arts, he referred to as such here for the first time. Furthermore, this book contains his hypotheses on the availability of, above all, the music of previous epochs as a compositional resource. Methods based on these hypotheses were utilized by Nyman, as an "author of notes," and have been adopted and practiced by others, including a young generation of sound artists and digital musicians—some no older than the book itself—who have radicalized those methods in keeping with contemporary technology.

Nyman's musical practice as contribution to an anticipatory theory of what would later become sampling is evident in many of his works, the interpretation of which is most prominently associated with the Campiello Band, the name under which Michael Nyman's ensemble was founded in 1976. Perhaps this comes across most clearly in *Harpsichord Concert* (1994/95), in *Concert for Trombone and Orchestra* (1995) and in *Double Concert for Saxophone, Cello and Orchestra* (1996).

The comparison of Nyman's hypotheses on availability with those of sampling may seem rather audacious but by no means misses the mark. To be sure, this is reflected rather in the structure of his music than in the production process. Sampling assumes the form of citation of what are often highly characteristic compositional patterns immanent in a musical work, which undergo variation, repetition and rearrangement.

His work's structural affinity to the most important styles of modern digital music, Nyman's willingness to embrace the attitudes as well as the rhythms and forms of pop music dynamics, and the composing he has done for projects attributable to popular culture such as the interactive CD-ROM game *Enemy zero* and, most recently, the film *Gattaca*, positively predestine him to appear at a festival like Ars Electronica. The Michael Nyman Band concert is thus a tribute to the multifaceted oeuvre of this English composer and musician, as well as a conceptual aspect in the confrontation of this body of work with digital music.

*Text: Heimo Ranzenbacher*