

Sunday, November 3, 2019, 3pm  
Hertz Hall

**Fretwork**  
with  
**Iestyn Davies, *countertenor***

**Fretwork**

Asako Morikawa, Richard Boothby, Joanna Levine, Emily Ashton, Sam Stadlen, *viols*

*If*

**Michael Nyman & Henry Purcell**

Michael NYMAN (b. 1944) *No Time in Eternity* (2016)

Henry PURCELL (1659–1695) *Fantazy No. 7 in C minor*, 19th June 1680  
*Fantazy No. 11 in G major*, 19th August 1680  
*Music for a while* (1679)

NYMAN *Music After a While* (2018)

PURCELL *The Evening Hymn* (1688)

INTERMISSION

NYMAN *Balancing the Books* (1999)

*If* (1995)  
*Why* (1995)

PURCELL *Fantazy No. 6 in F major*, 14th June 1680  
*Fantazy upon one note* (1680)

NYMAN *The Self-Laudatory Hymn of Inanna  
and her Omnipotence* (1992)

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**Michael Nyman at 75**

Is there a contemporary composer whose music is more immediately recognizable than Michael Nyman's? I can't think of one: the insistent ostinanti; the bold, yet simply conceived harmony; the driving rhythms; the aggressive instrumentation; the heavy bass-line—all have combined to make Nyman's music seem instantly familiar. He has been imitated endlessly, particularly by composers for moving images—film, television, advertisements, and so on; yet these are pale imitations, not the real thing.

While Nyman might be known now more for the music he wrote for Jane Campion's award-winning film from 1993, *The Piano*, he initially shot to fame a decade earlier with the music for Peter Greenaway's *The Draughtsman's Contract*, set in 17th-century England. This lurid tale was filmed with striking originality, which Nyman mirrored with his music, most of it derived from one of England's greatest composers, Henry Purcell. Purcell's music was well known to Nyman, as he had studied under the great musicologist Thurston Dart at King's College in London in the 1960s, and had then produced the first modern edition of Purcell's *Catches* in 1967.

So it was a natural choice to combine Nyman and Purcell on this program. Purcell never composed vocal music with an accompaniment of viols, but his magnificent set of *Fantazias* and *In Nomines* for viols demonstrated his interest in the instrument; so it was but a short step to realizing Purcell's original bass-line and completing the harmonies with parts for four or five viols.

Nyman's *No Time in Eternity* was commissioned in 2016 by the French countertenor Paulin Bündgen and Ensemble Celadon, and first performed by them in Lyon in March of that year. It is a setting of several poems by the great 17th-century poet Robert Herrick. All are from his *Hesperides*, published in 1648. Herrick's most famous verse is "To the Virgins to make much of time," espousing the advice to seize the day, or *carpe diem*; and we see similar sentiments in these epigrammatical works that

Nyman has chosen to set. Herrick was highly sensitive to music and a close friend of the Lawes brothers, Henry and William.

In 2017, Fretwork commissioned Nyman (with funds generously donated by Mark Reed) to write a new instrumental work for the group, and he responded with *Music After a While*, which is based on Purcell's song, or more particularly on its strikingly original bass-line, with its insidious rising chromatics. It was premiered in Milton Court, in London's Barbican Centre, in May 2018, just before Fretwork recorded it.

*The Evening Hymn* is a setting of the poem by Bishop William Fuller, friend of the diarists Pepys and Evelyn. The arrangement for viols was made by Silas Wolston. The sound bass here moves to accommodate modulations to different keys, as does that of *Music for a while*, which is from the incidental music to Dryden and Lee's translation of Sophocles' *Oedipus*, revived in 1692. Alecto is one of the Greek furies, with snakes for hair, whose work is to castigate mortals for their moral crimes.

Some time during the 2000s, I came across Nyman's *If*, scored for piano and strings, and thought it could work for viols; I made an arrangement and sent it to the composer, who approved. The calm simplicity of the harmonic pattern and melody makes for a compelling work, which expresses the child-like naivete of the text. It was written, together with *Why*, to texts by Roger Pulvers as part of an animated film by Seiya Araki, *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

And then, having seen my arrangement, Nyman suggested I look at a work he had written for the Swingle Singers, *Balancing the Books*, a wordless vocal work in eight parts. I arranged this, but we didn't find an opportunity to perform it until we were invited to take part in the Minimalism Unwrapped festival at Kings Place in London in 2015.

We had previously commissioned Nyman in 1992 to write a work for James Bowman and our ensemble for the Spitalfields Festival. Nyman described the remarkable chance encounter that led to the choice of text:

The text of the *Self-Laudatory Hymn* came to light while I was browsing among the bookshelves of an Armenian acquaintance in February 1992. Opening, for no apparent reason, a fat anthology entitled *Ancient Near-Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, edited by James B. Pritchard, I found S.N. Kramer's translation of this hymn. I was immediately taken with its tone of unashamed self-congratulation (very suitable, I thought, for James Bowman's voice) and its repetitive structure (very suitable for my music).

In conversation with another friend, I learned that Inanna was not an obscure goddess known only to me and a few experts on Sumerian civilisation, but a central focus of that civilisation and a figure highly esteemed by feminists. In Kramer's works: 'Female deities were worshipped and adored all though Sumerian history...but the goddess who outweighed, overshadowed, and outlasted them all was a deity know to the Sumerians by the name of Inanna, 'Queen of Heaven,' and to the Semites, who lived in Sumer, by the name of Ishtar. Inanna played a greater role in myth, epic, and hymn than any other deity, male or female.'

In the *Self-Laudatory Hymn*, I have made no attempt to evoke Sumerian music (or music of any other period). The opportunity to work with the viols of Fretwork recalls my use of early instruments in the first Michael Nyman Band, which uses rebecs rather than viols; and also my studies in the 1960s with Thurston Dart (and his memorable Musica

Britannica edition of Jacobean consort music) and the finest book ever written on English music, *English Chamber Music* by E.H. Meyer.

**Michael Nyman** was born in Stratford, in the East End of London on March 23, 1944. In addition to his current work as a composer, he is also a filmmaker, conductor, pianist, musicologist, writer, and photographer. Nyman studied at the Royal Academy of Music and, following his PhD studies with Thurston Dart, traveled to Romania to collect folk music.

While working as music critic for *The Spectator*, Nyman coined the term "minimalism" in 1968. He also wrote for *The New Statesman*, *The Listener*, and *Studio International*. His seminal work on new music—*Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*—was published in 1974 and recently was reprinted.

Nyman's preferred musical form is opera, and he has written several notable works in this form: *The Man Who Mistook his Wife for a Hat*, *Facing Goya*, and *Many and Boy: Dada*.

More recently, he has focused on composing soundtracks for silent films from the late 1920s: Jean Vigo's *À Propos de Nice*, Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, and new soundtracks for three Dziga Vertov films—*Man with a Movie Camera*, *The Eleventh Year*, and *A Sixth Part of the World*.

—Richard Boothby

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

For the past three decades (the ensemble celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2016), **Fretwork** has explored the core repertory of great English consort music, from Taverner to Purcell, and made classic recordings against which others are judged.

In addition, the ensemble has become known as a pioneer of contemporary music for viols, having commissioned over 40 new works from composers including Michael Nyman, George Benjamin, Sir John Tavener, Gavin Bryars, Elvis Costello, Alexander Goehr, John Woolrich, Orlando Gough, Fabrice Fitch, Peter Sculthorpe, Sally Beamish, Tan Dun, Barry Guy, Andrew Keeling, Thea Musgrave, Simon

Bainbridge, Poul Ruders, John Joubert, Duncan Druce, and Nico Muhly.

The group now frequently presents programs consisting entirely of contemporary music.

Fretwork made its Carnegie Hall debut in February of 2010, and now tours the United States most years. Also in 2010, the group curated a week-long concert series at Kings Place in London's Kings Cross area, culminating in the world premiere of Orlando Gough's *The World Encompassed*, a 70-minute piece describing in musical terms Drake's circumnavigation of the globe in 1577–80.

In 2011, the National Centre for Early Music, in collaboration with the BBC, hosted a com-

petition for young composers to create a four-minute piece for Fretwork. The group workshopped the shortlisted pieces at the NCEM in York in October, and then the winning entries were premiered in Kings Place in December.

The following year, Fretwork premiered Nico Muhly's *My Days* with the Hilliard Ensemble in Wigmore Hall. And in 2013, the ensemble played no fewer than 10 concerts in London's major chamber music halls: Wigmore Hall, Kings Place, Cadogan Hall, and the Royal College of Music.

In 2014, Fretwork concentrated on the music of John Dowland with a major tour of the UK with Ian Bostridge. The musicians also spent a week in the Britten Studio in Aldeburgh, re-working Orlando Gough's *The World Encompassed* and incorporating spoken narrative drawn from contemporary accounts of Drake's voyage.

Fretwork premiered Muhly's *Slow: An In Nomine* in 2015 at Kings Place, and collaborated with actor Simon Callow in the revised version of *The World Encompassed*, recording the work for Signum Classics.

In 2016, the ensemble celebrated its 30th anniversary with a star-studded June concert at Kings Place; recorded four new albums; and made its longest tour of the Americas, traveling through the United States, Canada, and Colombia.

Last year, Fretwork performed and recorded a program celebrating the music of Michael Nyman—who turned 75 earlier this year—with the Iestyn Davies; the group is currently touring North America with this program. Also this year, Fretwork begins a series of concerts at Wigmore Hall, presenting the greatest English consort music from the Golden Age—six concerts including music ranging from Cornyshe to Purcell.

After graduating from St John's College, Cambridge, **Iestyn Davies** (*countertenor*) studied at the Royal Academy of Music, London.

In 2017, Davies received an Olivier Award nomination for singing the role of Farinelli in

*Farinelli and the King* opposite Mark Rylance, a Globe Theatre production that had successful runs on the West End and Broadway.

On the opera stage, Davies has appeared at the Royal Opera House (Covent Garden), Glyndebourne Festival Opera, English National Opera, La Scala (Milan), Metropolitan Opera, Chicago Lyric Opera, and in Munich, Vienna, and Zurich. Recent highlights include returns to the Bayerische Staatsoper for *Ottone/Agrippina*, Terry/*Marnie* at the Metropolitan Opera, and *Polinesso/Ariodante* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Later this season, he reprises the role of *Ottone* at the Royal Opera House and the Metropolitan Opera.

Celebrated on the concert platform, Davies has performed at Lincoln Center, La Scala (Milan), the Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), the Tonhalle (Zurich), Théâtre des Champs-Élysées (Paris), and the Barbican Centre (London). Recent highlights include concerts with William Christie and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra; Bernard Labadie, Les Violons du Roy, and the Handel & Haydn Society; Jonathan Cohen and Arcangelo at the BBC Proms; and a tour with the Britten Sinfonia. This season he appears with Laurence Cummings and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment in Bucharest for *Orfeo ed Euridice*, and Harry Bicket and the New York Philharmonic for *Messiah*. He also joins Emmanuel Haim and the NDR Emphilharmonie Orchestra for a series of concerts of the *St. John Passion* at the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg.

A committed recitalist, with repertoire that ranges from Dowland to Clapton, Davies is a regular guest at Carnegie Hall and enjoys a successful relationship with both the Wigmore Hall and Saffron Hall, where he has curated multiple residencies.

Davies has twice received the Gramophone Recital Award, and in 2017 won the Gramophone Baroque Vocal Award for his Bach Cantatas disc with Arcangelo and Jonathan Cohen. In 2017, Iestyn Davies was awarded an MBE (Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) for his services to music.

**Michael Nyman**  
*No Time in Eternity*  
 [Robert Herrick]

*To Music*

Begin to Charm, and as thou strok'st mine ears  
 With thy enchantment, melt me into tears.

Then let thy active hand scud o'er thy lyre.  
 And make my spirits frantic with fire.

That done, sink down into a silvery strain,  
 And make me smooth as balm and oil again.

*No Time in Eternity*

By hours we all live here; in Heaven is known  
 No spring of time or time's succession.

*Fortune*

Fortune's a blind profuse of her own,  
 Too much she gives to some, enough to none.

*The Definition of Beauty*

Beauty no other thing is than a beam  
 Flashed out between the middle and extreme.

*Things mortal still mutable*

Things are uncertain and the more we get,  
 The more on icy pavements we are set.

*The Watch*

Man is a watch wound up at first, but never  
 Wound up again: once down he's down for ever.  
 The watch once down, all motions then do cease;  
 And man's pulse stopp'd, all passions sleep  
 in peace.

*To Music (ii)*

Music, thou queen of heaven, care-charming  
 spell,  
 That strik'st a stillness into hell:  
 Thou that tam'st tigers, and fierce storms  
     that rise,  
 With thy soul-melting lullabies,  
 Fall down from those chiming spheres  
 To charm our souls as thou enchant'st our ears.

**Henry Purcell**  
*Music for a while*

Music for a while  
 Shall all your cares beguile.  
 Wond'ring how your pains were eas'd  
 And disdain'd to be pleas'd  
 Till Alecto free the dead  
 From their eternal bands,  
 Till the snakes drop from her head,  
 And the whip from out her hands.

**Purcell**  
*The Evening Hymn*

[Bishop William Fuller]  
 Now, now that the sun hath veil'd his light  
 And bid the world good night  
 To the soft bed, my body I dispose,  
 But where, where shall my soul repose?  
 Dear God, even in Thy arms,  
 And can there be any so sweet security!  
 Then-to-thy-rest, O my soul  
 And singing, praise the mercy that prolongs  
     thy days.  
 Hallelujah!

**Nyman**

*If*  
 [Roger Pulvers]

If at the sound of a wish, the summer sun  
     would shine,  
 And if just a smile would do to brush all the  
     clouds from the sky.  
 If at the blink of an eye the autumn leaves  
     would fall;  
 And if you could sigh a deep sigh to scatter  
     them over the earth,  
 I'd blink my eyes and wave my arm,  
 I'd wish a wish to stop all harm.

If at the wave of a hand the winter snows  
     would start  
 And if you could just light a candle to change  
     people's feelings and hearts,  
 I'd whisper love in every land,  
 To every child, woman and man;

That's what I'd do if my wishes come true.

Nyman

*Why*

[Roger Pulvers]

We ask our father why,  
Why people cannot love,  
Why people hate all day and night,  
Spoiling children's dreams.

We ask our mother why,  
Why people cannot live,  
Why they won't let the children be,  
Crushing their belief.

Tell us why, Papa, your children want to know:  
"Some day you'll find out"  
Leave us lonely and cold.  
Tell us why, Mama, your children want to know:  
"You shouldn't ask such things"  
Leaves us no room to grow.

We ask our parents why,  
Why children cannot grow.  
Don't look away from us,  
Don't lie, please don't lie,  
Your children need to know.

Tell me why, somebody,  
We children need an answer  
Why adults fight over God,  
Why adults fight over color,  
Why adults go to war.

*The Self-Laudatory Hymn of Inanna  
and her Omnipotence*

My father gave me Heaven, gave me earth.  
I the Queen of Heaven am I.  
Is there one God who can vie with me?  
Enlil gave me Heaven, gave me earth,  
I the Queen of Heaven am I.

He has given me lordship,  
He has given me queenship.  
He has given me battle, given me combat  
And he gave me flood and tempest.

He has placed Heaven as a crown.  
He has tied the earth as a sandal.  
He has fastened the holy me garment  
About my body.

The Gods are my vassals:  
I, a Queen am I.  
The Anuna scurry about.  
I, a life-giving wild cow am I,  
The life-giving wild cow of father Enlil am I,  
His life-giving wild cow that walks at the head.

When I enter the Ekur, the house of Enlil,  
The gate-keeper puts not his hand against  
my breast,  
The vizier says not to me: stop!

Heaven is mine, earth is mine.

In Erech, the Eanna is mine,  
In Zabalom, the Giguna is mine.

In Nippur, the Duranki is mine,  
In Ur, the Edilman is mine.

In Girsu the Eshdam is mine,  
In Adab, the Emdara is mine.

In Kish, the Hursag Kalama is mine,  
In Dev, the Amashkuga is mine.

In Akshak, the Anzaka is mine,  
In Agada, the Ulmash is mine.

Is there one god who can vie with me?

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