

## Michael Nyman: Symphonies - Symphony No. 5, Symphony No. 2 (2017)

Written by bluesever

Sunday, 17 December 2017 15:24 - Last Updated Tuesday, 19 December 2017 08:42

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### Michael Nyman: Symphonies - Symphony No. 5, Symphony No. 2 (2017)



1 *Symphony No. 5: Movement 1* 6:55 2 *Symphony No. 5: Movement 2* 3:24 3  
*Symphony No. 5: Movement 3* 6:19 4 *Symphony No. 5: Movement 4* 4:27 5 *Symphony*  
*No. 2: Movement 1* 6:09 6 *Symphony No. 2: Movement 2* 8:18 7 *Symphony No. 2:*  
*Movement 3* 7:20 8 *Symphony No. 2: Movement 4* 6:37 Michael Nyman - piano World  
Orchestra World Orchestra of Jeunesses Musicales Josep Vicent - Conductor

Michael Nyman: The Symphonies At the end of 2014 I decided to write a series of 17 or more symphonies, of which around 12 are already completed, being worked on and recorded. Since around 1979 the Michael Nyman Band has always been my 'travelling symphony orchestra': the instrumentation is somewhat classical (strings, woodwind, brass - with a piano/bass guitar 'rhythm section'), volume is given through amplification. Equally important was the fact that the Band gave me the opportunity to continue being a performer/music director and to develop a wider audience that might never knowingly be familiar with the sound of an orchestra. When I have written large-scale compositions for soloists, I did of course use the orchestra, rather than the Band - there are concertos for Gidon Kremer, Elisabeth Chojnacka, Kathryn Stott, the Labeque Sisters, John Harle, Julian Lloyd Webber, Christian Lindberg, and Colin Currie, amongst others, and *Musique à Grande Vitesse (MGV)* is essentially a large-scale Concerto Grosso for the amplified Michael Nyman Band and unamplified orchestra. However now, the symphony series dispenses with amplification and a soloist and allows me to create a greater textural diversity, more sophisticated structures for an audience that is familiar with the concert stage, filled with a large number of acoustic instruments. 'Symphony No.11: Hillsborough Memorial' (a kind of transcription of 'Memorial' that I wrote for Sarah Leonard and the Michael Nyman Band in the wake of the Heysel Stadium disaster in 1985), has already been released on MN Records and now Symphonies Nos. 5 and 2 are presented as the next in the series of the Symphonies. Symphonies Nos. 3, 4 and 8 have also been recorded and are to be released in 2017. ---Product Description, amazon.com

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Much of British composer Michael Nyman's output has been in the genres of opera and film score; the music for *Gattaca* is his. He has fused a minimalist language with essentially cinematic gestures in a way that's both approachable and quite compact. As he approached his eighth decade, Nyman announced plans for a series of 17 (or more) abstract symphonies; the movements of the pair here are labeled only with metronome indications. In this he follows Philip Glass, whose music his own somewhat resembles. You may be puzzled by the fact that the Symphony No. 5 here was completed a year before the lower-numbered Symphony No. 2, but Nyman seems to have worked on groups of the symphonies at more or less the same time. In these two works, Nyman's intention seems to be to explore systematically the collection of gestures he has used in more referential music, working out the implications of each in terms of a movement structure of moderate length. There is an overall mood (the Symphony No. 5 is the darker of the pair), but the main interest is in the individual movements. Nyman's thematic material retains its stickiness, and even in the intrinsically ambitious symphony genre he remains something of a crossover minimalist, one whose tunes remain in your head even if you can't quite whistle them for the most part. His decision to write symphonies may have seemed surprising, but these could well enter the repertory. The ambitiously named World Orchestra under Josep Vicent delivers the crisp yet not remote performances that are needed here.

--James Manheim, allmusic.com

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